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THE SINISTER HOUSE OF SECRET LOVE

NO. 3

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The SINISTER HOUSE of SECRET LOVE

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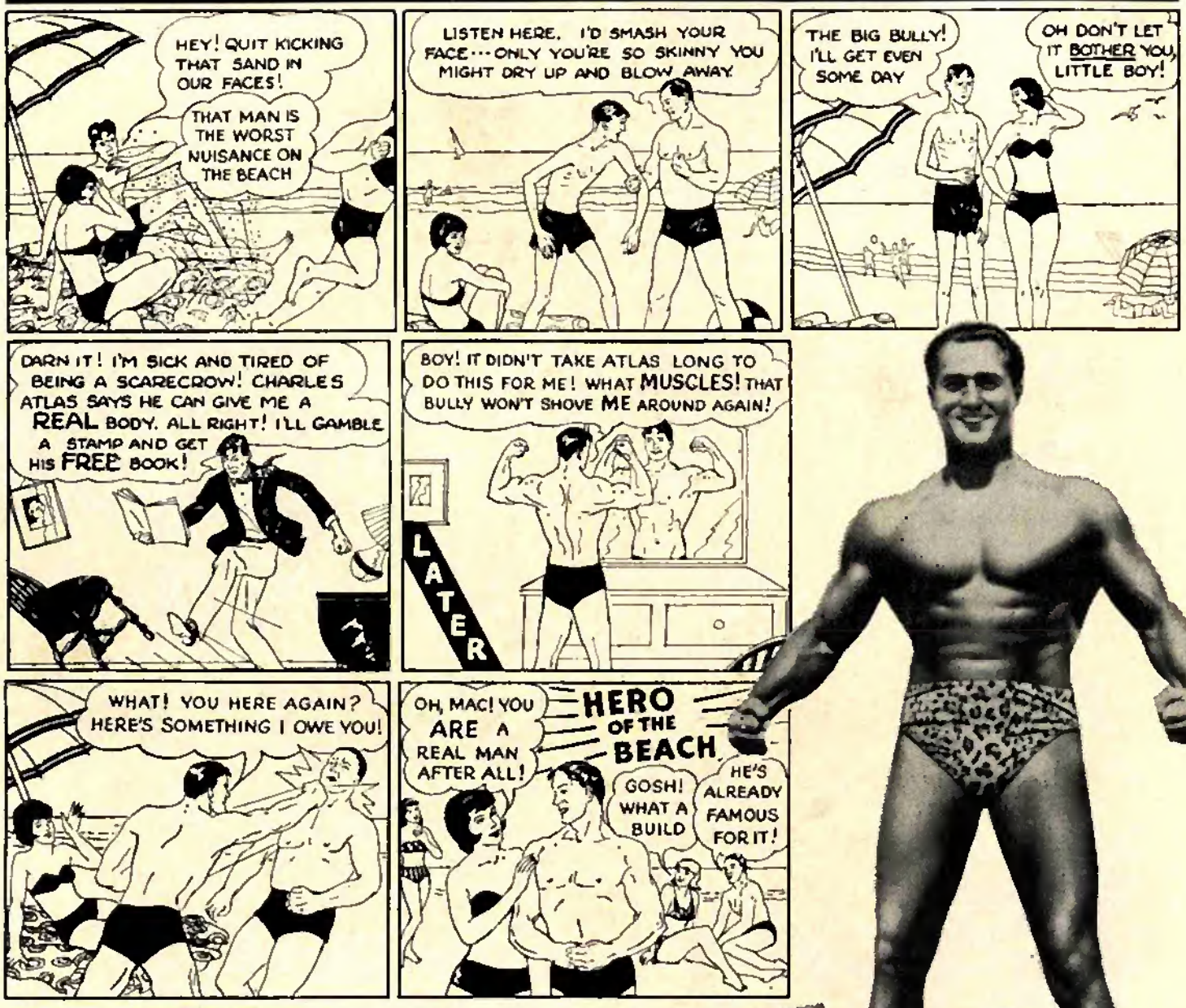
THE INSULT THAT MADE A MAN OUT OF "MAC"



Let Me PROVE I Can Make YOU A NEW MAN!

ARE you "fed up" with seeing the huskies walk off with the best of everything? Sick and tired of being soft, frail, skinny or flabby — only HALF ALIVE? I know just how you feel. Because I myself was once a puny 97-pound "runt." And I was so ashamed of my scrawny frame that I dreaded being seen in a swim suit.

The Secret of How I Got My Build

Then I discovered a wonderful way to develop my body fast. It worked wonders for me — changed me from the scrawny "runt" I was at 17, into "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." And I can build up YOUR body the very same natural way — without weights, springs or pulleys. Only 15 minutes a day of pleasant practice — in the privacy of your room.

My "Dynamic-Tension" method has already helped thousands of other fellows become real he-men in double-quick time. Let it help YOU. Not next month or next year — but Right NOW!

"Dynamic-Tension" Builds Muscles FAST!

If you're like I was, you want a powerful, muscular, well-proportioned build you can be proud of any time, anywhere. You want the "Greek-God" type of physique that women rave about at the beach — the kind that makes other fellows green with envy.

Mail Coupon Now for My 32-Page Illustrated Book

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(Check as many as you like)

- ☐ Bender Chest and Shoulders
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- ☐ Tireless Legs
- ☐ Slimmer Waist and Legs
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- ☐ More Magnetic Personality
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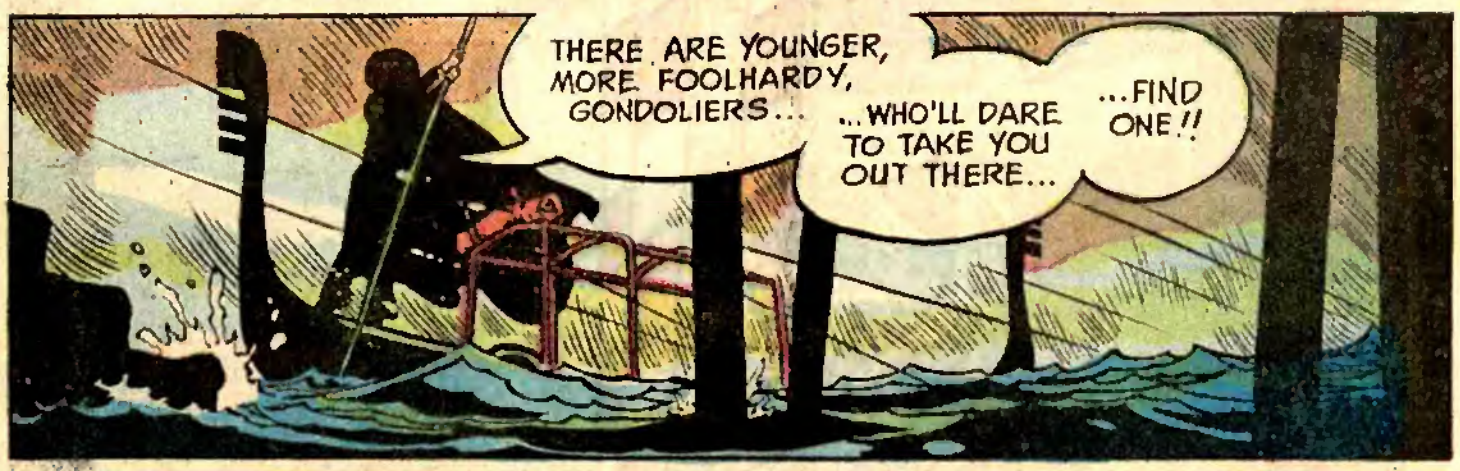


"THE SUDDEN FOG SWALLOWED HIS PARTING WORDS... I SHIVERED ONCE AGAIN! WAS FATE CONSPIRING TO KEEP ME FROM ALL THAT I WANTED SO MUCH... HAD COME SO FAR TO GET?"

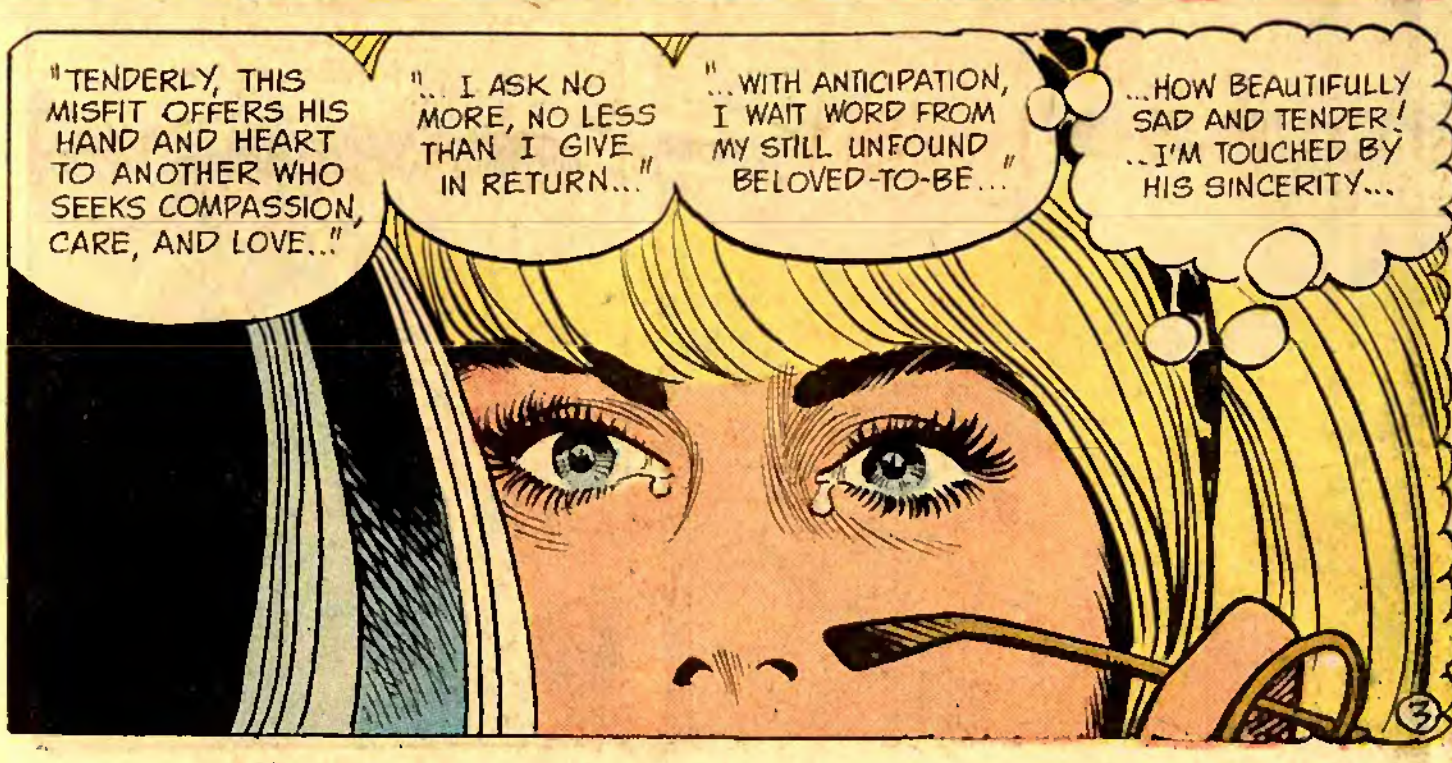
...NOT FOR ME... KATHY HARWOOD...

...BUT THAT'S REALLY NOT ENOUGH... ANY MORE...

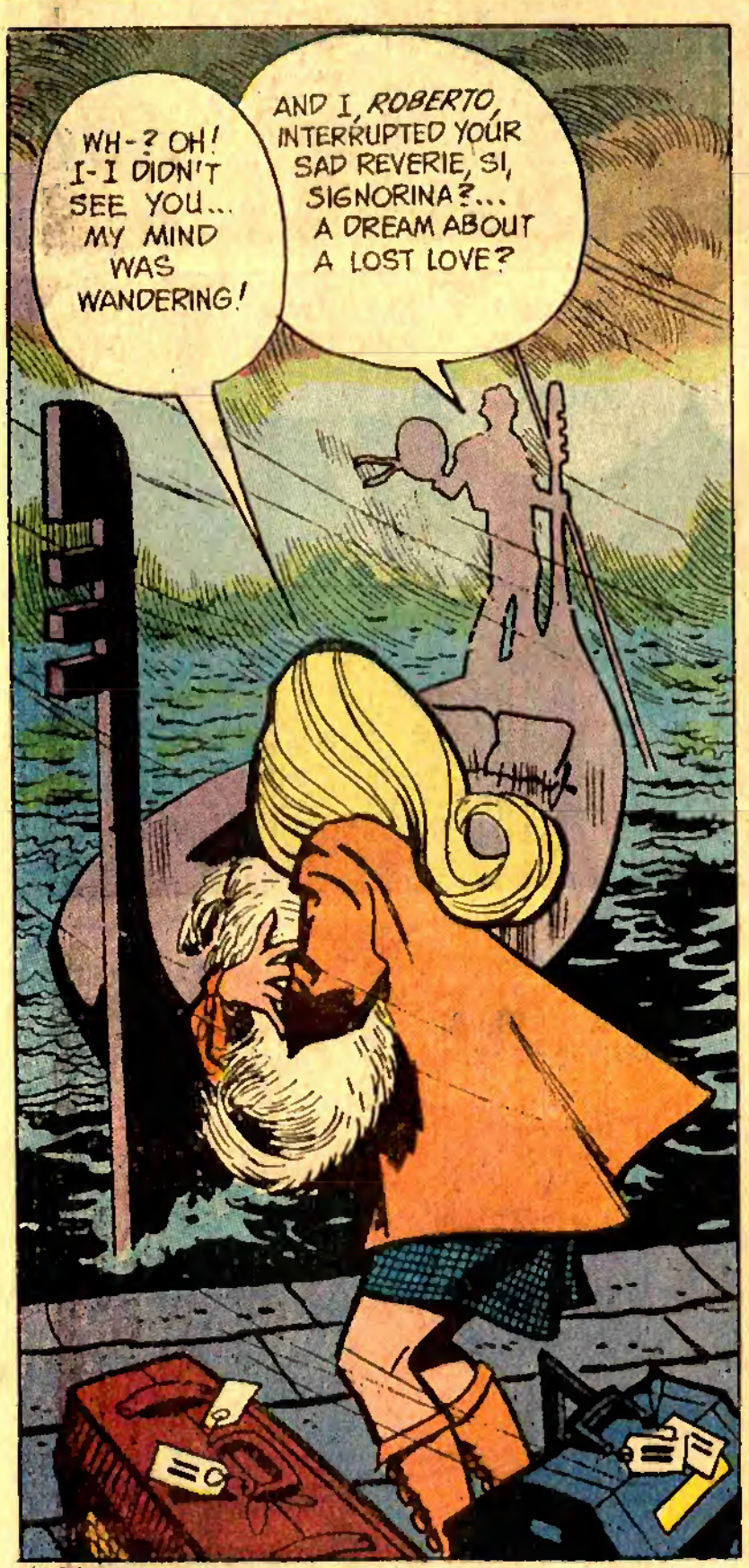
YES, DEAR "POODGE," I HAVE YOU...

"NO MORE LONELINESS FOR ME... I'D HAD ENOUGH OF IT FOR A LIFETIME...! DRIFTING, LIKE THE FOG ABOUT ME, MY MIND WENT BACK TO THAT FATEFUL DAY..."
"... A DAY LIKE EVERY OTHER BORING ONE I SPENT AS A MAGAZINE PROOFREADER, UNTIL—
CAST YOUR 'BABY-BLUES' OVER THIS 'PERSONALS' AD-COPY, KATHY!
THIS GUY CAN'T BE FOR REAL!
ALL THE WAY FROM ITALY, HMMM? AND A 'COUNT,' NO LESS!

"COUNT LORENZO DI FALCO...
...CASTEL DI FALCO...
...ISOLA—" THAT MEANS 'ISLAND,' I THINK...
..."ISOLA TRANQUILLO, VENEZIA, ITALIA"...
WHEW! WHAT A MOUTHFUL!
GO ON, KATHY!


"TENDERLY, THIS MISFIT OFFERS HIS HAND AND HEART TO ANOTHER WHO SEEKS COMPASSION, CARE, AND LOVE..."
"... I ASK NO MORE, NO LESS THAN I GIVE IN RETURN..."
"...WITH ANTICIPATION, I WAIT WORD FROM MY STILL UNFOUND BELOVED-TO-BE..."
...HOW BEAUTIFULLY SAD AND TENDER! ..I'M TOUCHED BY HIS SINCERITY...

"WHAT GIRL'S HEART COULD HAVE RESISTED SUCH AN EMOTIONAL APPEAL? CERTAINLY NOT I... NOT KATHY HARWOOD 'MISFIT' THAT I KNEW I WAS! THUS, OUR LONG IMPASSIONED EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BEGAN..."
SIGNORINA...
SIGNORINA?
..CAN I BE OF HELP TO YOU?


WH-? OH! I-I DIDN'T SEE YOU... MY MIND WAS WANDERING!
AND I, ROBERTO, INTERRUPTED YOUR SAD REVERIE, SI, SIGNORINA?... A DREAM ABOUT A LOST LOVE?

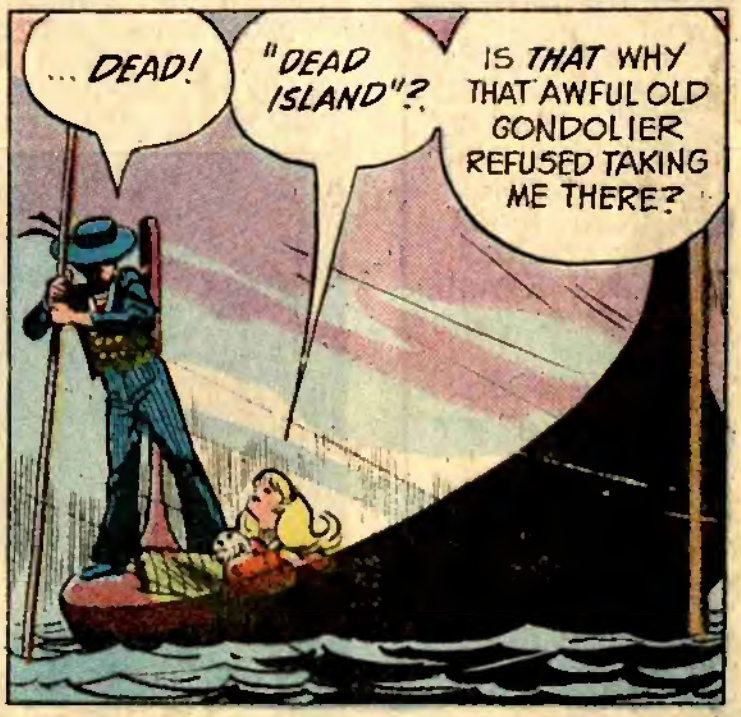
OF MY LOVE "TO BE," IF I CAN EVER GET TO HIM, OUT THERE, IN THE FOG... ON THE "ISOLA..."
YOU DON'T MEAN... THE "ISOLA TRANQUILLO" ???

OH-H! NOT YOU TOO?!
THIS IS MADNESS! REALLY, I'VE NEVER...
SIGNORINA, I'M NOT AFRAID FOR MYSELF...

...I FEAR FOR YOU!
...YOU MUST NOT GO TO THAT CURSED ISLAND!
...YOU MUST SENSE THAT I SPEAK THE TRUTH...YET YOU PRETEND NOT TO HEAR ME!
WHA-? T-TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME, YOU-!!

I'M YOUR SERVANT, SIGNORINA... LET IT BE AS YOU WISH... WE GO!
I'M-SORRY, ROBERTO! I AM SO TIRED AFTER MY LONG AIR TRIP...
...AND THEN, ALL OF THIS NONSENSE ABOUT THAT ISLAND...

WHY IS EVERYBODY SO FEARFUL OF-
...OF "ISOLA TRANQUILLO"? ANCIENT SUPERSTITIONS...
..THE WORD 'TRANQUILLO MEANS 'PEACEFUL,' SI... BUT IT ALSO MEANS...


...DEAD!
"DEAD ISLAND"?
IS THAT WHY THAT AWFUL OLD GONDOLIER REFUSED TAKING ME THERE?

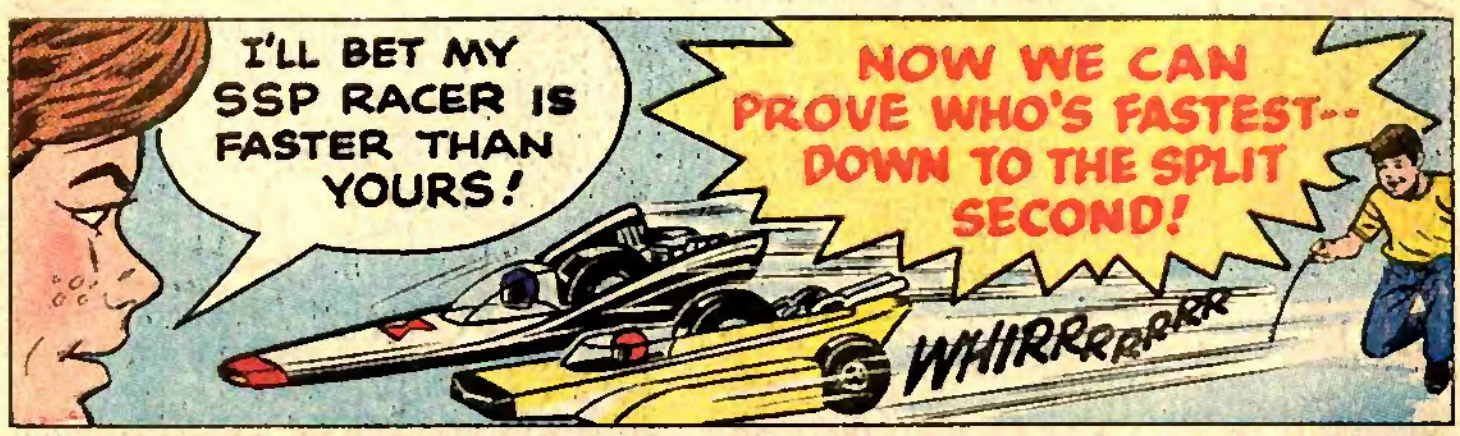
"SUDDENLY I WAS NO LONGER AFRAID... SUCH SILLY FEARS FROM WORDS! NOW, MY MIND RETURNED TO THE WORDS OF HOPE AND INTENSITY THAT INITIATED MY CORRESPONDENCE WITH DEAR LORENZO..."

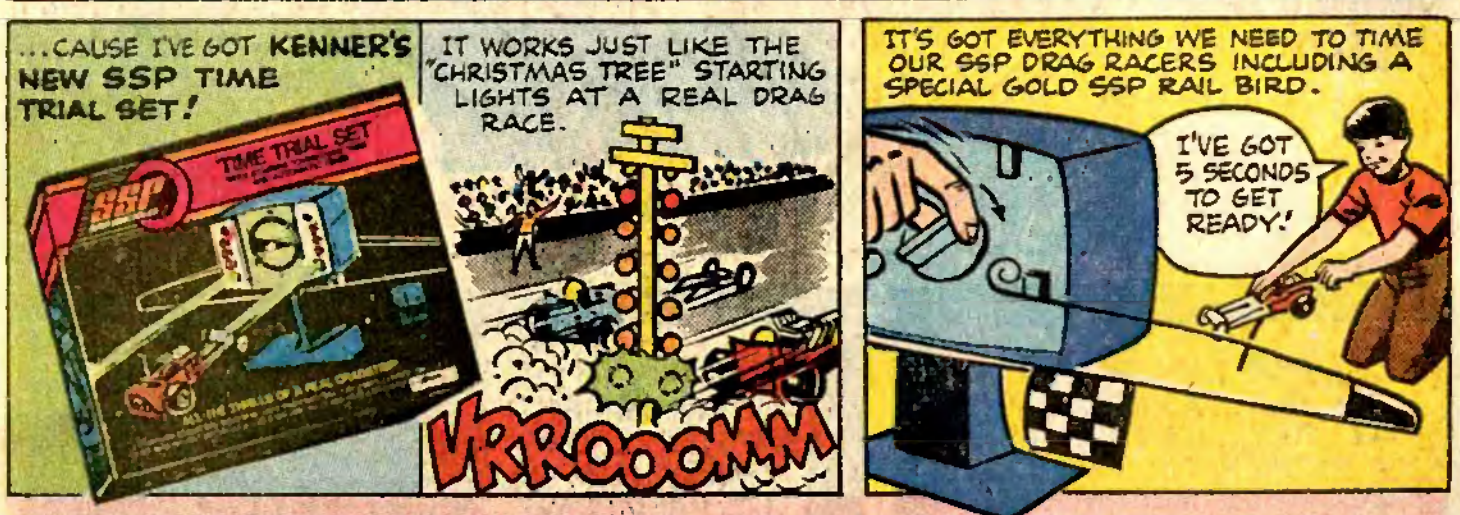
"OUR LETTERS FORMED BRIDGES OF LOVE ACROSS THE VAST OCEANS SEPARATING US AND OUR HANDS SEEMED INTERTWINED AS WE PENNED OUR EMOTION-FILLED THOUGHTS AND DREAMS OF FULFILLMENT"...

"THEN, FINALLY, CAME ONE LONE WORD.. "AMORE".. LOVE... OH, THAT WORD GREETED ME LIKE WARM LIPS, LEAPING FROM THE PAGE, FILLED ME WITH ITS FIRE! NOTHING COULD KEEP US APART ANYMORE... *NOTHING!!*"

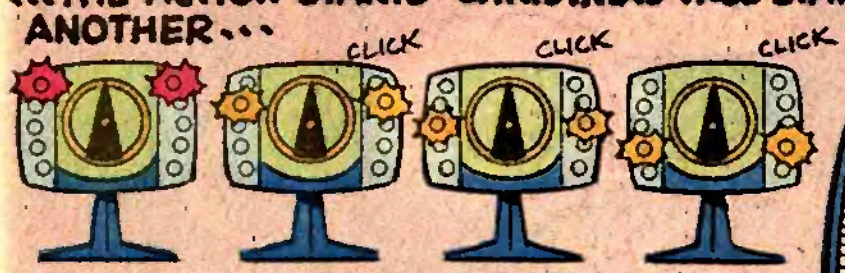
"...NOW THAT I WAS HERE, MY GONDOLA NEARING THE HIGH FOG-SHROUDED 'ISOLA TRANQUILLO', OLD FEARS AND MISGIVINGS RACED THROUGH MY HEART AND MIND... WOULD THIS LAST MEASURE OF MY LONG, ARDUOUS TRIP CULMINATE IN THE LOVE I ACHED TO FIND HERE...WITH LORENZO..."

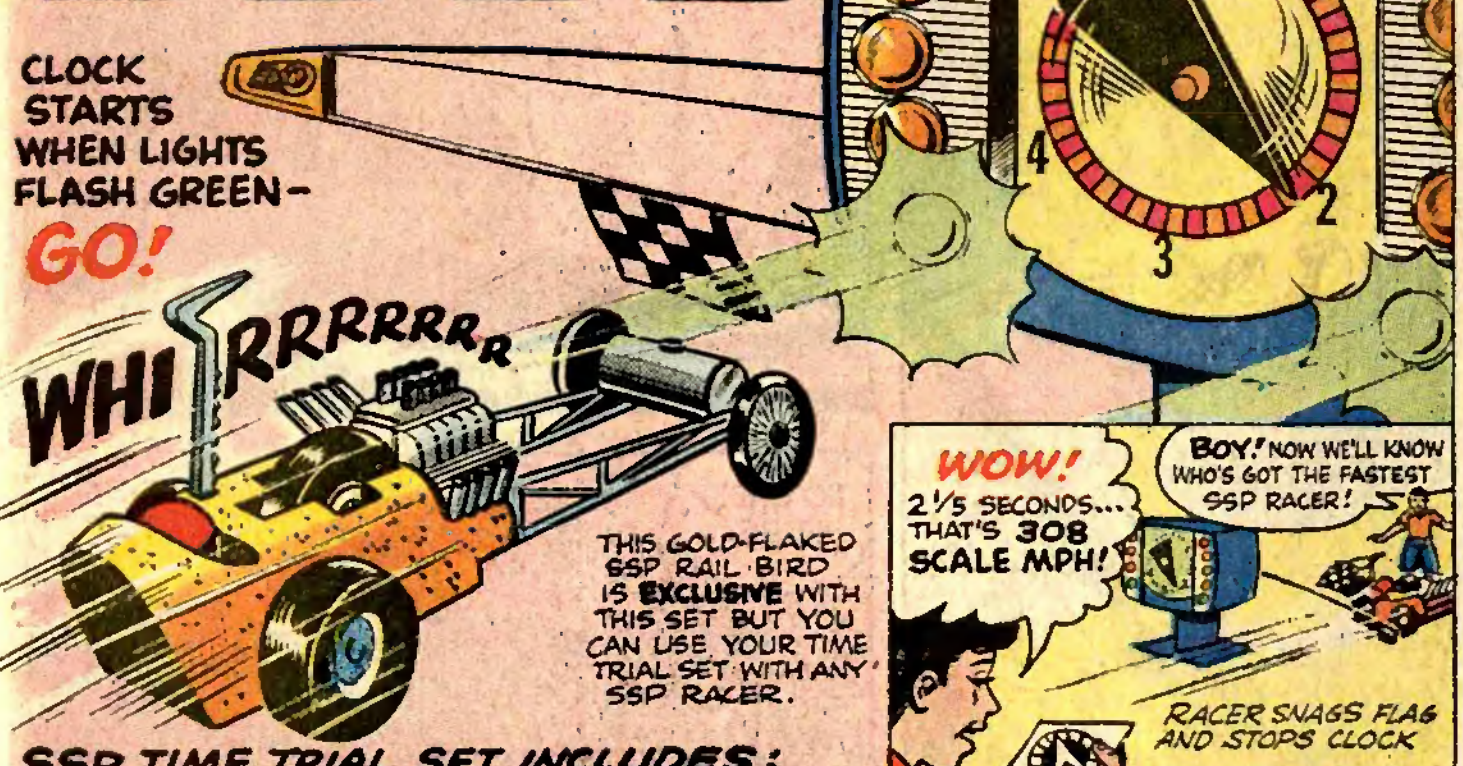
"BRIDE OF THE FALCON" CONTINUED ON THE SECOND PAGE FOLLOWING





...THE ACTION STARTS--CHRISTMAS TREE STARTING LIGHTS FLASH ONE AFTER ANOTHER...





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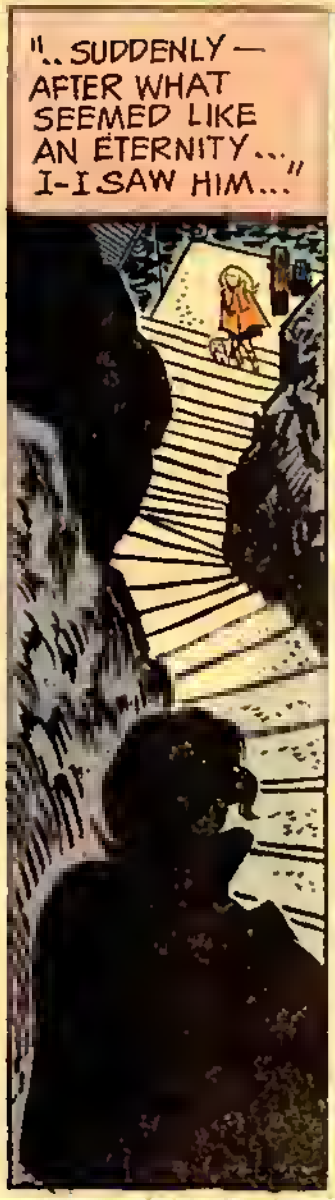
BRIDE of the FALCON
Chapter II
JOURNEY'S END
"–EARLY ON, IN OUR COURTSHIP CORRESPONDENCE, I WROTE LORENZO OF MY INFIRMITY, SIMPLY AND DIRECTLY! AND, IN RETURN, LORENZO SENT ME A PHOTO OF HIMSELF WITH AN ENIGMATIC NOTE.."
"DARLING... THIS PICTURE FAVORS MY 'GOOD SIDE,' AND TELLS BUT 'HALF THE STORY.' IN THIS, AND ONLY THIS RESPECT, AM I HALF A MAN! ALL MY LOVE.. LORENZO.."
".. I DIDN'T KNOW IT, THEN, BUT... AS HE TOLD ME LATER... HE TOO, WAS APPREHENSIVE ABOUT OUR FATED MEETING. HE... COUNT LORENZO DI FALCO... MASTER OF CASTEL DI FALCO... 'CASTLE OF THE FALCON'"!
"WAS THIS TO BE HIS ONLY WITHHELD MYSTERY... THE UNSEEN HALF OF HIS HANDSOME FACE–?"
NO MATTER... SOON, I'LL KNOW!
NO ONE'S HERE...
...WERE YOU EXPECTED, SIGNORINA?
YES– RING THE BELL, ROBERTO!!
7

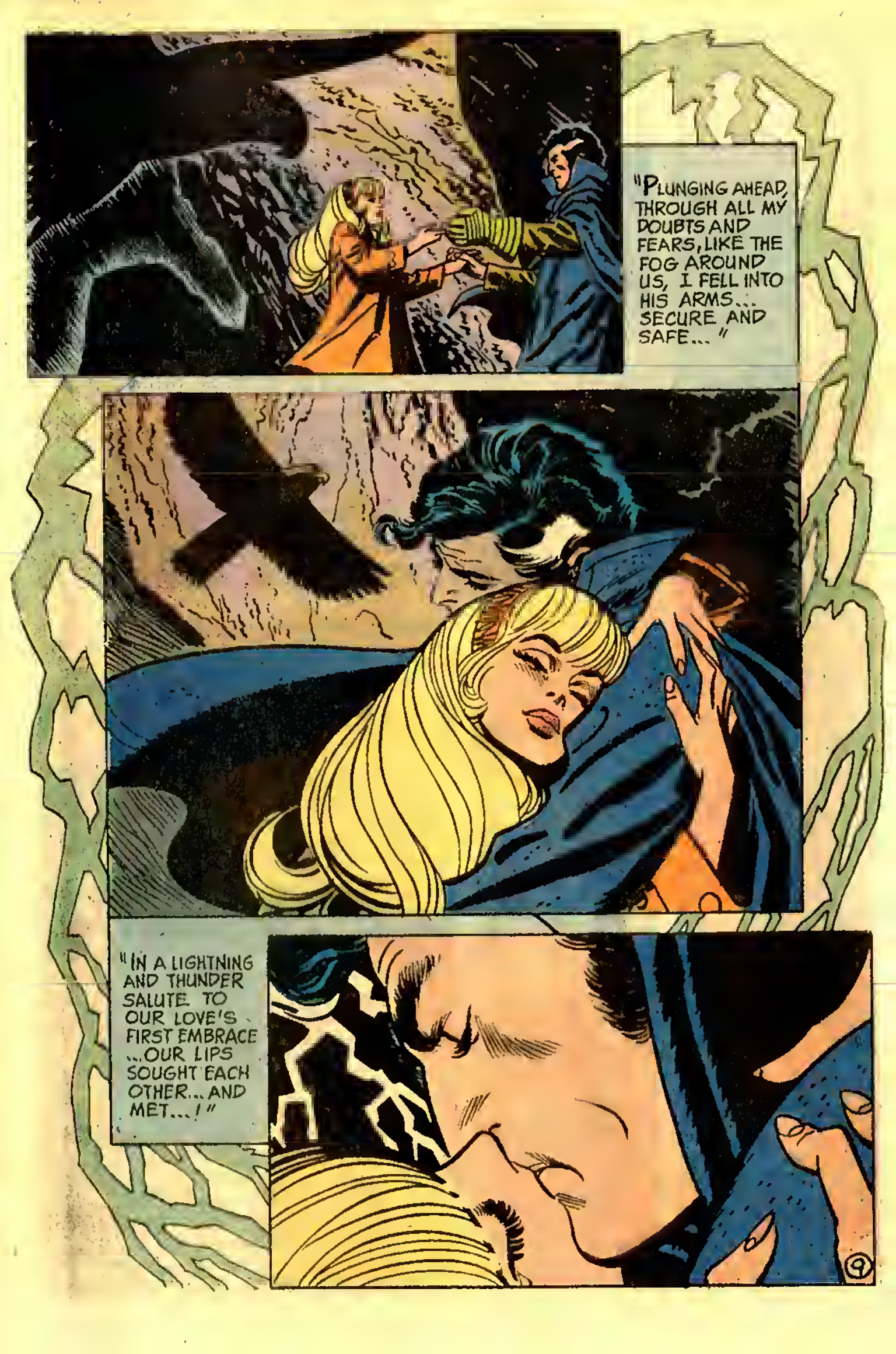
"THE VIBRATIONS FROM THAT ANCIENT BELL COURSED THROUGH MY BODY LIKE A DEATH KNELL..."
KABONG
A BONG
A BONG
A BONG

"—AND, AS IF ROBERTO HAD READ MY MIND HE OFFERED..."
YOU ARE RIGHT, SIGNORINA...
..SUCH A BELL WOULD SURELY WAKE THE DEAD!
I'LL GO NOW—AND WHILE I'VE NEVER FEARED THE UNKNOWN...

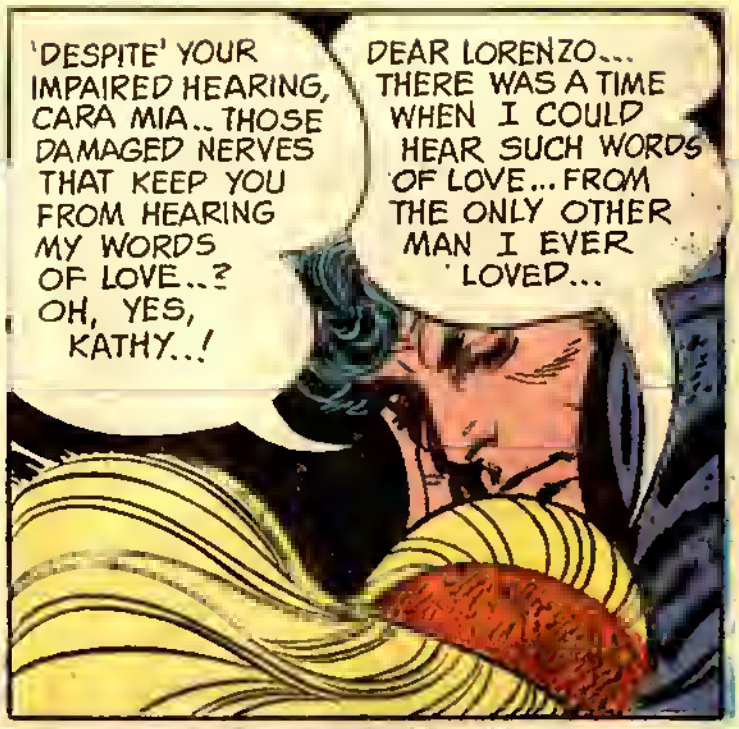
...I DO FEAR THE FIERCE FALCONS...
..THE COUNT'S WATCHDOGS OF HIS CASTEL DI FALCO...
..CIAO, SIGNORINA.. MAY YOUR VISIT BE BLESSED WITH GOOD FORTUNE!

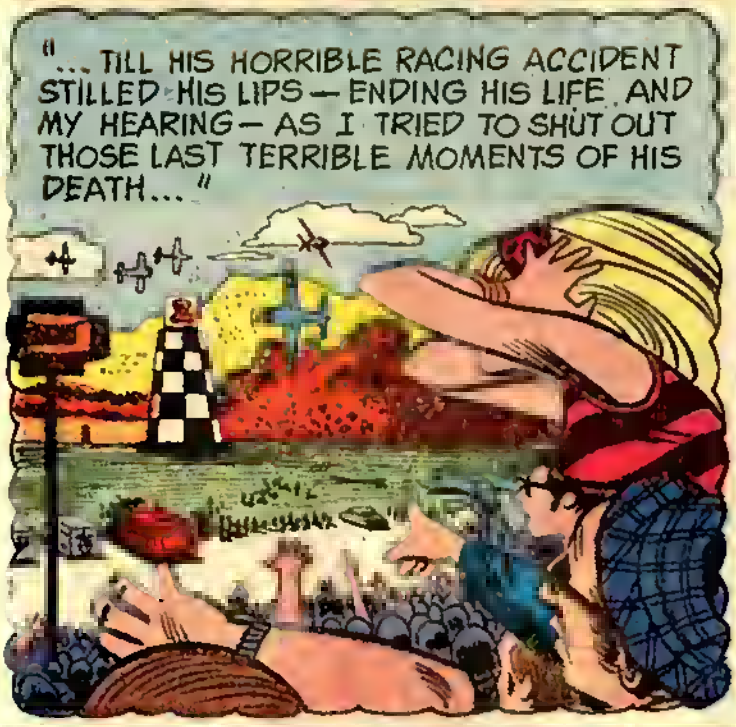

"..SUDDENLY— AFTER WHAT SEEMED LIKE AN ETERNITY... I-I SAW HIM..."

"WE BOTH STOPPED...POISED BREATHLESS IN THIS FROZEN MOMENT OF OUR ENJOINED LIVES..."

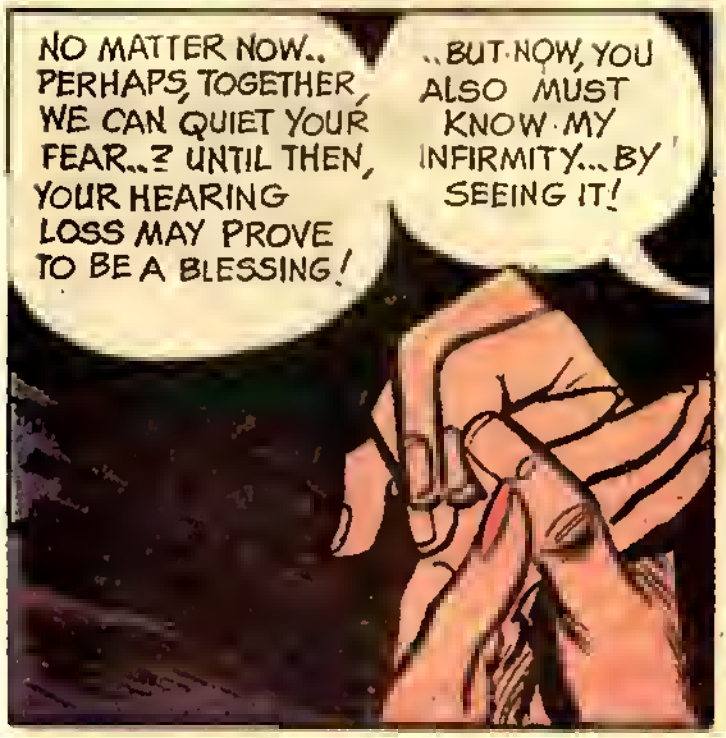

"PLUNGING AHEAD, THROUGH ALL MY DOUBTS AND FEARS, LIKE THE FOG AROUND US, I FELL INTO HIS ARMS... SECURE AND SAFE..."
"IN A LIGHTNING AND THUNDER SALUTE TO OUR LOVE'S FIRST EMBRACE ...OUR LIPS SOUGHT EACH OTHER... AND MET...!"
9

LORENZO.. DEAREST.. ALL THAT YOU WROTE ME FROM DEEP INSIDE YOUR HEART, IS.. IT TRUE..?...
..YOU'VE ACCEPTED ME...?
..DESPITE.. DESPITE...


'DESPITE' YOUR IMPAIRED HEARING, CARA MIA.. THOSE DAMAGED NERVES THAT KEEP YOU FROM HEARING MY WORDS OF LOVE..? OH, YES, KATHY..!
DEAR LORENZO... THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I COULD HEAR SUCH WORDS OF LOVE... FROM THE ONLY OTHER MAN I EVER LOVED...


"... TILL HIS HORRIBLE RACING ACCIDENT STILLED HIS LIPS — ENDING HIS LIFE AND MY HEARING — AS I TRIED TO SHUT OUT THOSE LAST TERRIBLE MOMENTS OF HIS DEATH..."

OR, PERHAPS, BECAUSE YOU WISHED NEVER TO HEAR SUCH WORDS OF LOVE FROM ANOTHER..?..
FEARING THE GUILT OF BETRAYING HIM... EVEN THOUGH HE WAS DEAD

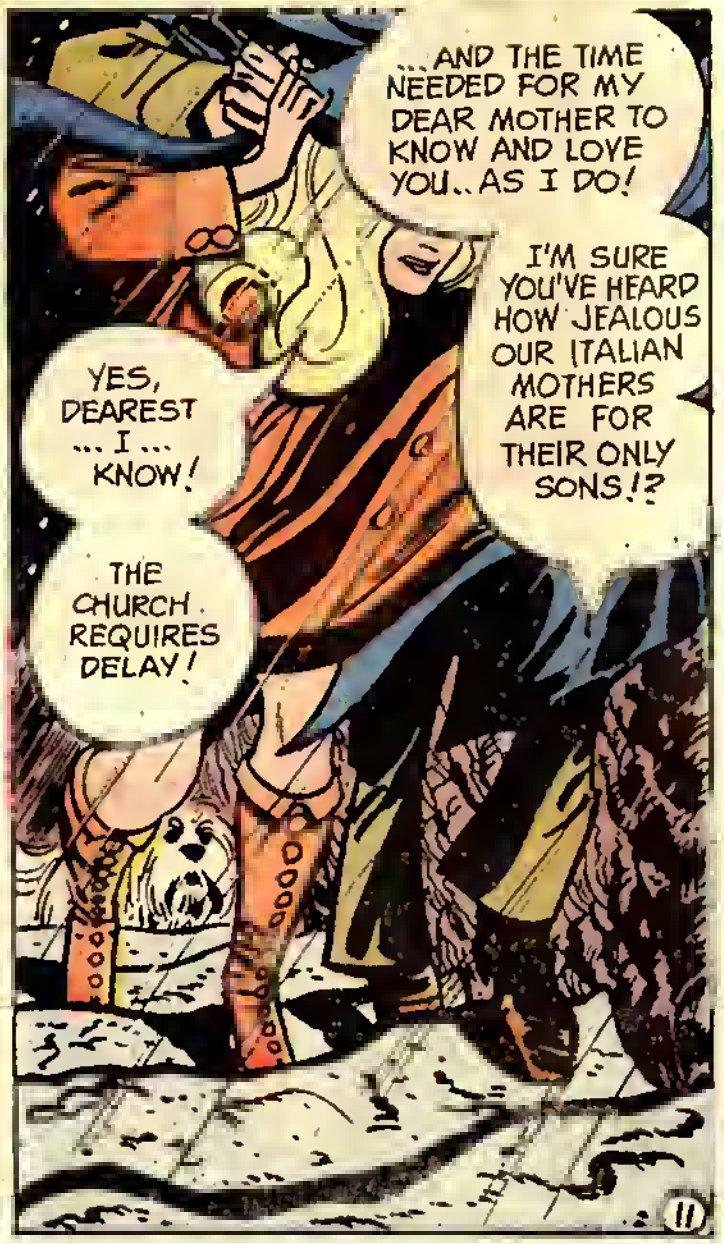

NO MATTER NOW.. PERHAPS, TOGETHER, WE CAN QUIET YOUR FEAR..? UNTIL THEN, YOUR HEARING LOSS MAY PROVE TO BE A BLESSING!
..BUT NOW, YOU ALSO MUST KNOW MY INFIRMITY... BY SEEING IT!

YOU MUST SEE IT.. IF YOU ARE TO KNOW THE ENTIRE MAN... YOUR SAD LORENZO!

WHA-?!! OHHH!!
MY CHILDHOOD PET, CARISSMA!
A-A FALCON!!
A TREACHEROUS SPECIES FROM WHICH ONE SHOULD NOT EXPECT ANY LOYALTY... ANYMORE THAN FROM SOME WOMEN!

OH, LORENZO - YOU'VE BEEN HURT MORE DEEPLY THAN YOUR SCARS CAN SHOW...
PERHAPS...
..BUT NO ONE CAN HURT ME EVER AGAIN!
NOT NOW THAT YOU ARE MINE!

"SUDDENLY ALL THE PAIN OF DOUBT AND APPREHENSION WAS SWEPT UP WITH THE WIND AND RAIN AROUND US, WHEN LORENZO SAID..."
WE WILL MARRY..
OF COURSE, WE MUST WAIT FOR A WHILE!


...AND THE TIME NEEDED FOR MY DEAR MOTHER TO KNOW AND LOVE YOU..AS I DO!
I'M SURE YOU'VE HEARD HOW JEALOUS OUR ITALIAN MOTHERS ARE FOR THEIR ONLY SONS!?
YES, DEAREST ... I ... KNOW!
THE CHURCH REQUIRES DELAY!

YOUR LAST LETTER EXPLAINED WHY YOU COULDN'T LEAVE YOUR MOTHER TO MEET ME AT THE AIRPORT...
ALAS, NO... SHE SEEMS TO GET WORSE EVERY DAY, DESPITE THE EFFORTS OF EUROPE'S BEST DOCTORS!
..HAS SHE IMPROVED ANY?
THERE'S NO HOPE LEFT...!

IT'S A MIRACLE THAT SHE SURVIVED HER LAST STROKE AT ALL! BUT SHE IS A TRUE DI FALCO... STRONG.. DETERMINED TO LIVE..!
AND NOW SHE'LL HAVE A BETTER CHANCE WITH SIGNORINA HARWOOD HERE... EH, SIGNORE..?

SILENCE, PEASANT!
SPEAK ONLY WHEN YOU'RE SPOKEN TO!!!

LORENZO!?! WHY WERE YOU SO HARSH TO HIM? HE WAS ONLY..
BAH! HE IS STUPID!!
LIKE THE OLD STAFF I FIRED, BEFORE YOU CAME, FOR NOT KNOWING THEIR 'PLACE'...

YOU FIRED THEM?
BUT... WHY?
TO.. TO START AFRESH.. WITH YOU — TO SWEEP AWAY ALL THE OLD COBWEBS OF A TORTURED PAST...!
YES..! THAT'S WHY...

"CAUTIONING ME NOT TO BE SHOCKED BY THE RAVAGED APPEARANCE OF A ONCE-BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, WE ENTERED HIS MOTHER'S ROOMS...

MADRE MIA, WE DO NOT DISTURB ..DO WE?

SHE HEARS, BUT CANNOT REPLY! HER VOCAL CORDS ...PARALYZED...

...MOTHER, THIS IS MY BRIDE-TO BE, SIGNORINA KATHY HARWOOD, OF WHOM I'VE SPOKEN SO OFTEN—!

SEE? HER EYES LIGHT UP— CAN'T SPEAK, BUT HAS EYES KEEN AS A PRIME FALCON'S!

MOTHER WILL BE A PROPER CHAPERONE TILL WE WED, KATHY! TO AVOID OUR BEING 'INDISCREET'--

EH, MADRE MIA?

KLIK KLIK KLIK

IN FACT, MY FONDEST HOPE IS FOR YOU TWO TO BECOME CLOSE FRIENDS!

I'D LIKE THAT, LORENZO... VERY MUCH! BUT.. WITH HER INABILITY TO SPEAK, EVEN MY LIP-READING ABILITY WON'T HELP..!

"AND SO MY NEW LIFE BEGAN..TRYING TO WIN THE LOVE OF LORENZO'S MOTHER! BUT NOT WITHOUT AROUSING SOME RESENTMENT.. FROM ANGELINA, A SIMPLE PEASANT GIRL, WHO FELT I WAS USURPING HER RIGHTFUL PLACE AND DUTIES... AND MADE SURE I WAS AWARE OF IT—"

"ANGELINA 'INSTRUCTED' ME HOW TO CARE FOR THE CONTESSA.. IN LESS THAN SUBTLE WAYS! BUT ALSO HELPING ME IN HIS SWEET, UNOBTRUSIVE MANNER, WAS DEAR LORENZO..."

EXCUSÉ, SIGNORINA... BUT THE SUN SHINING IN THE EYES OF THE CONTESSA WHO CANNOT COMPLAIN, IS UNPLEASANT, SI?

PERHAPS IF THE MAID-SERVANT ACQUAINTED OUR GUEST WITH THE NEEDS OF MY MOTHER BEFOREHAND..?!?

"AND LORENZO HELPED ME IN SO MANY OTHER THOUGHTFUL WAYS..."

IT'S ALWAYS BETTER TO PUT HER MEDICINE IN THE MILK—

..BETTER FOR MOTHER! AS IT WILL TASTE LESS BITTER!

YES, DEAR... OF COURSE..!

"AND THEN THERE WERE THE BLISSFUL MOMENTS, WHEN WE STROLLED THE ONCE-STATELY GROUNDS.. AND DEAR LORENZO CONFIDED HIS DREAMS FOR OUR FUTURE.."

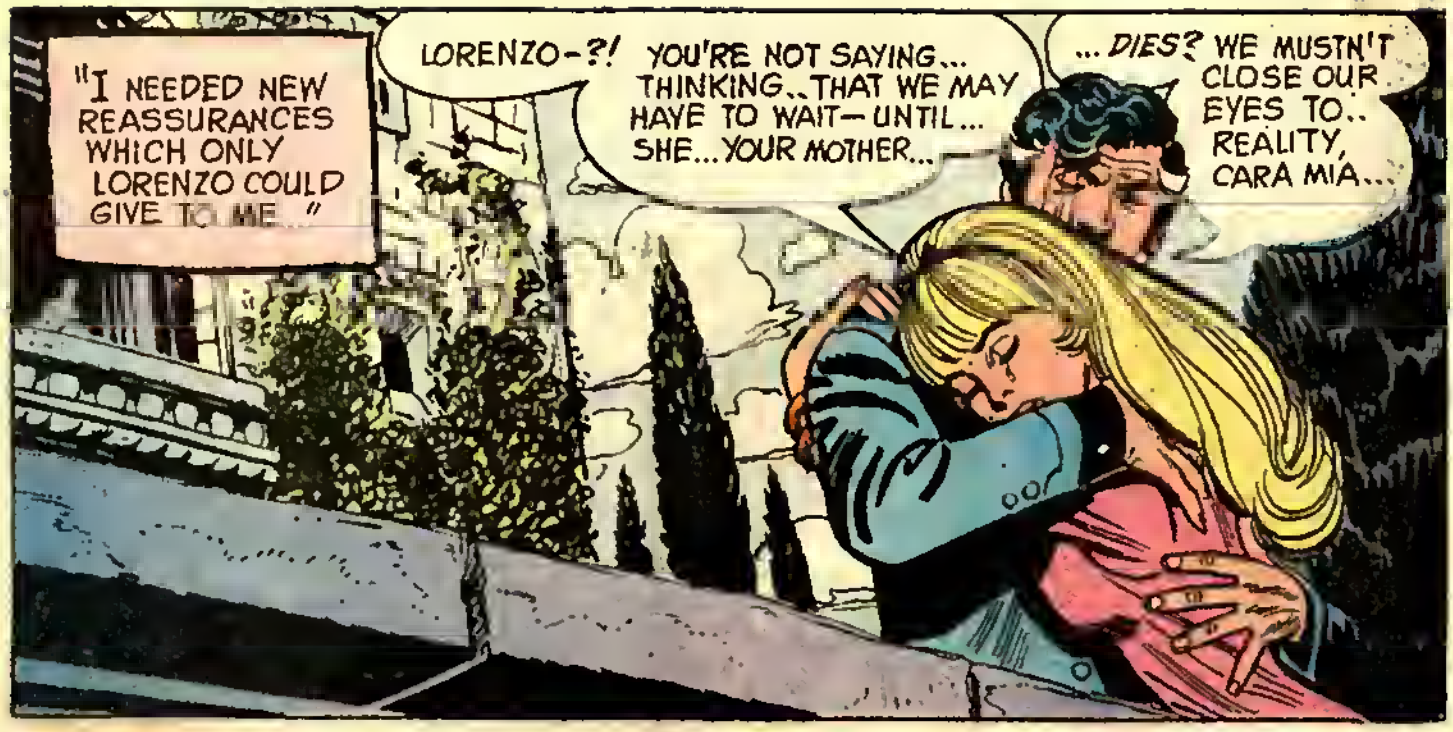
ONE DAY... HOPEFULLY SOON, BELLISSIMA... ALL THIS WILL BE RESTORED TO ITS ORIGINAL SPLENDOR!"

..A TRUE PALAZZO.. TO HOUSE THE NEW CONTESSA OF THE CASTEL DI FALCO!

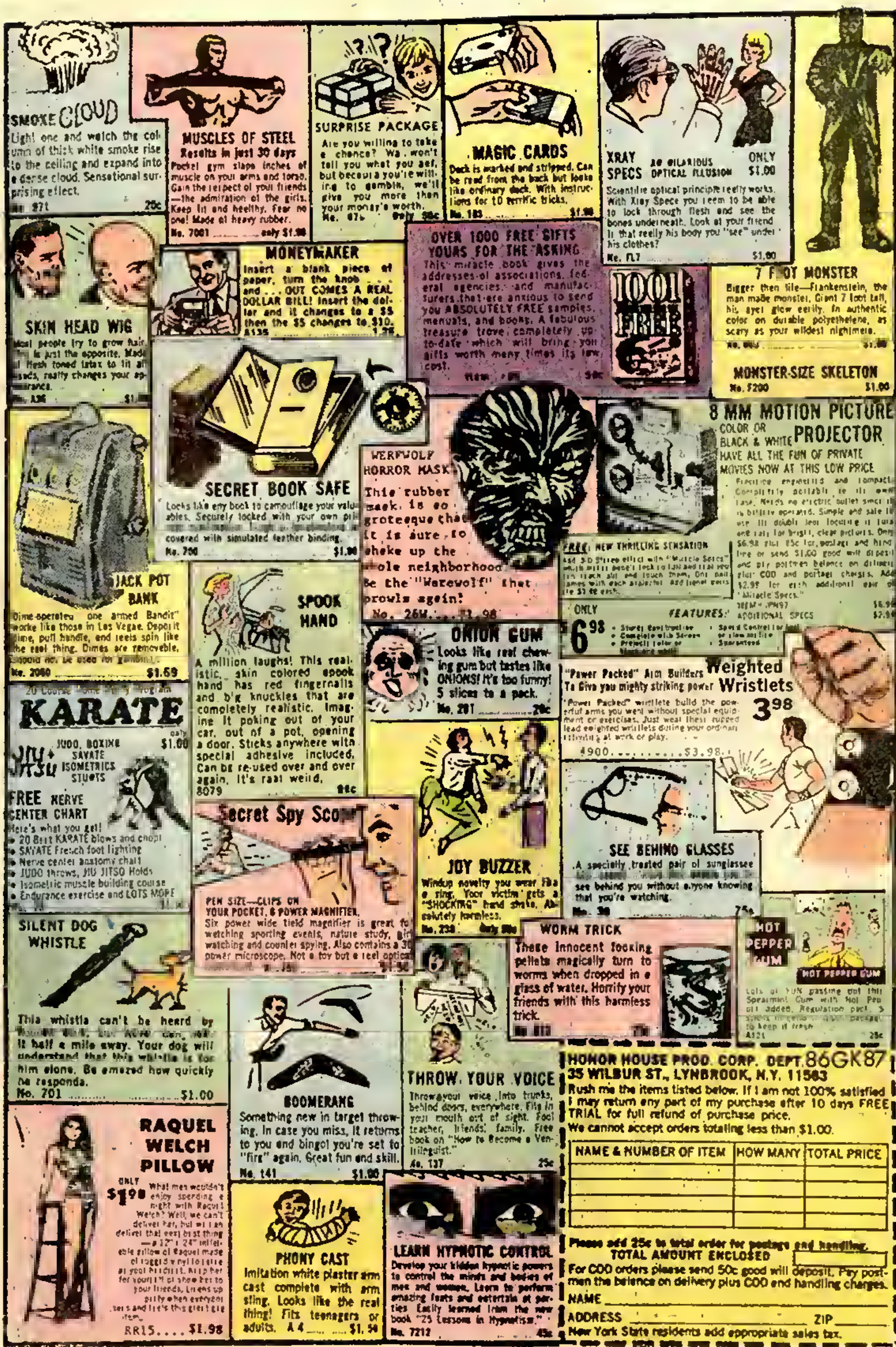
IF ONLY.. IF ONLY YOUR CAMPAIGN TO WIN MOTHER OVER TO OUR MARRIAGE WERE PROCEEDING MORE SWIFTLY...

SHE STILL GIVES NO SIGN OF APPROVAL, DOES SHE..? OH.. I'VE TRIED SO HARD TO WIN HER CONFIDENCE...

"ONCE AGAIN, THAT FEELING OF INSECURITY CREPT OVER ME.."



"BRIDE OF THE FALCON" CONTINUED ON THE SECOND PAGE FOLLOWING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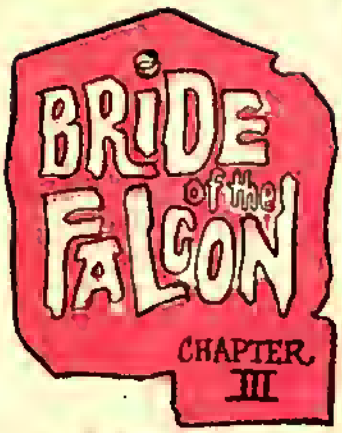
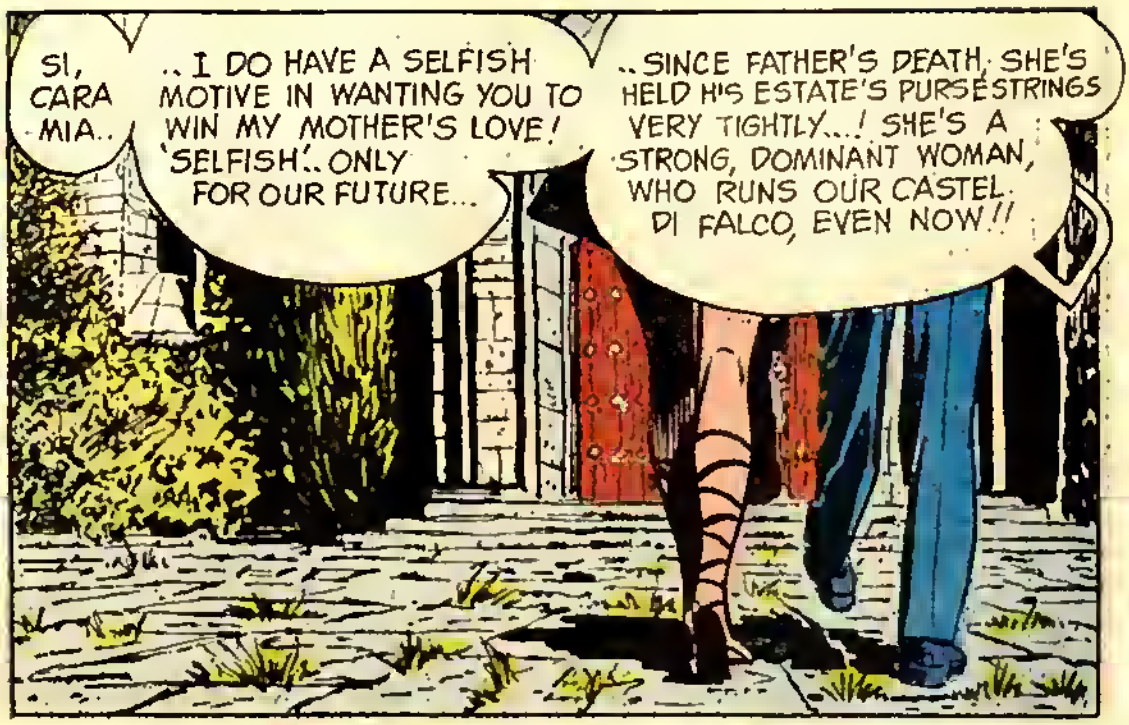
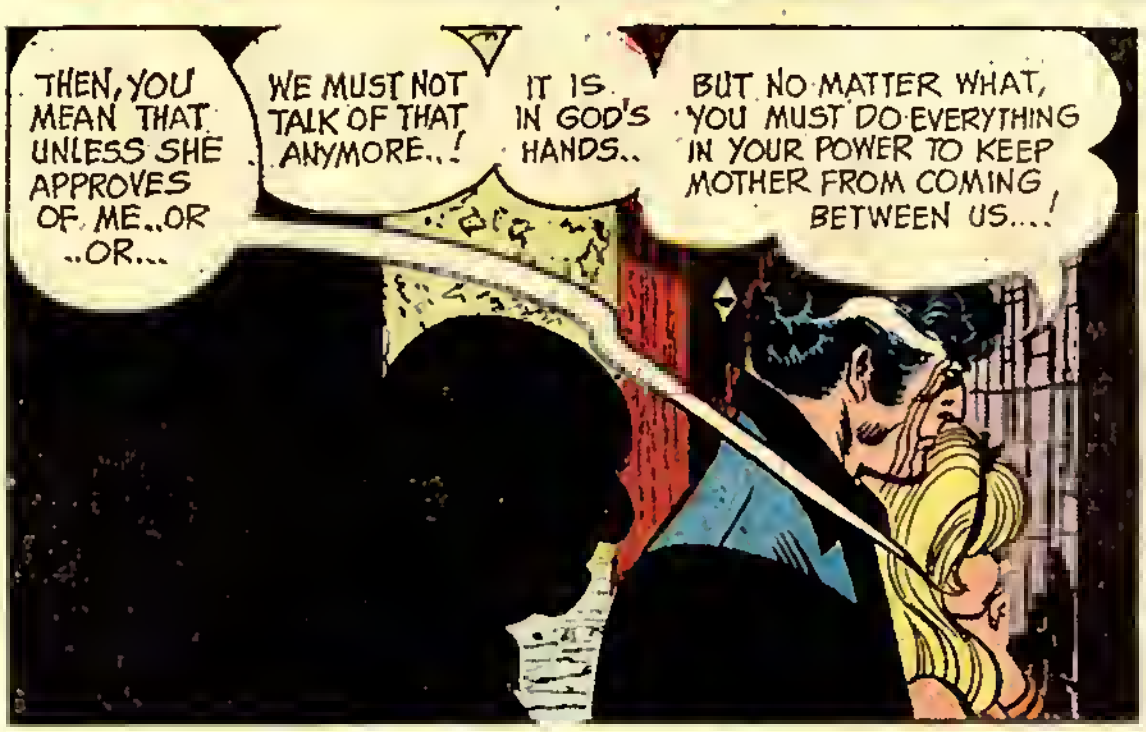
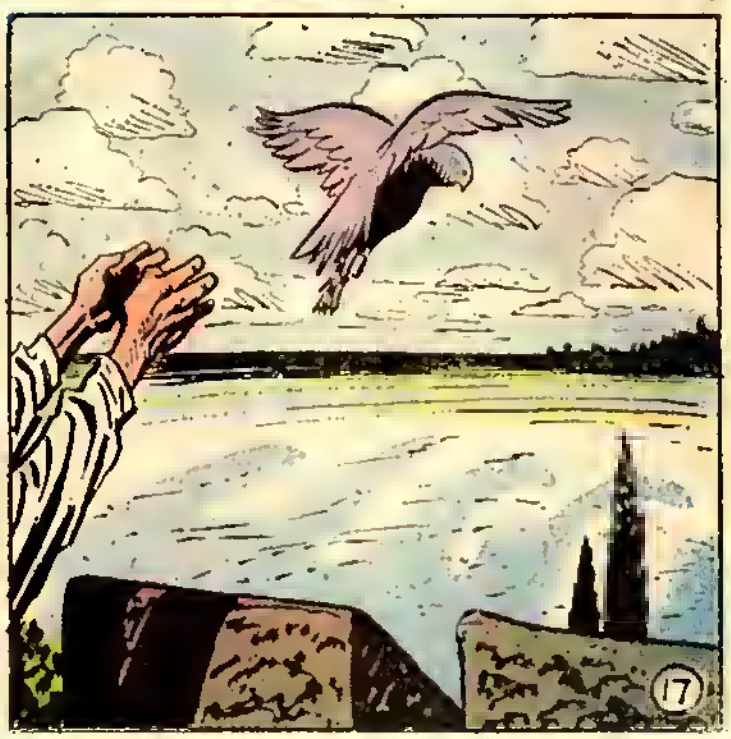


DREAD SECRET of the FALCON'S CASTLE





"ONCE MORE REASSURED OF HIS LOVE, I WAS UNAWARE OF THE STRANGE UNDERCURRENTS AROUND ME... THINGS GOING ON, THAT I WAS NOT TO LEARN ABOUT TILL LATER!"



"IT WASN'T LONG AFTERWARD THAT AN 'INCIDENT' OCCURRED—! THOUGH A MINOR ONE, IT REVIVED ALL MY VAGUE FEARS IN ONE MAD BURST...

I'D JUST SET OUT MOTHER'S MIDDAY MEAL AND MEDICATION, WHEN..."

POODGE.. DON'T GET UNDER FOOT...

..I'LL FIX YOU A BIT OF FOOD IN A...

POODGE!

YIP YIP RRUFF

OHH..!!

NNOO!!

NOW LOOK AT THE MESS YOU'VE MADE FOR ME, POODGE! ..OH, IS THAT HOW YOU'LL CLEAN IT UP FOR ME--?

SCAT!!

YOU'RE A NAUGHTY..

..NAUGHTY POODGE!

SCAT!

"LATER IN THE DAY I LOOKED FOR HIM BUT COULDN'T FIND HIM ANY-WHERE... POOR POODGE, I'D FRIGHTENED HIM SO! AND, SINCE ALL MY WAKING HOURS WERE SPENT WITH LORENZO, I'D NEGLECTED MY POODGE BADLY..."

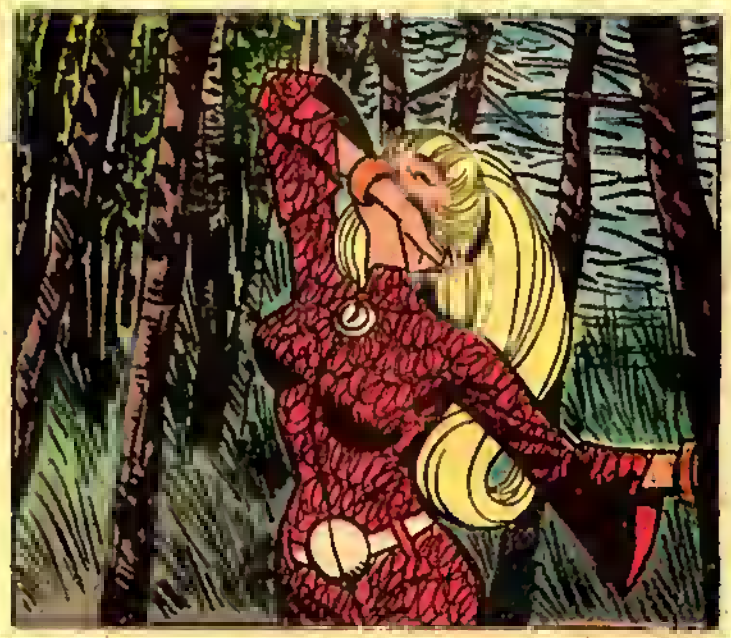
POODGE?

POODGIE!?

COME ON NOW!

WHERE ARE YOU HIDING?

"I-I FOUGHT BACK WAVES OF NAUSEA..."



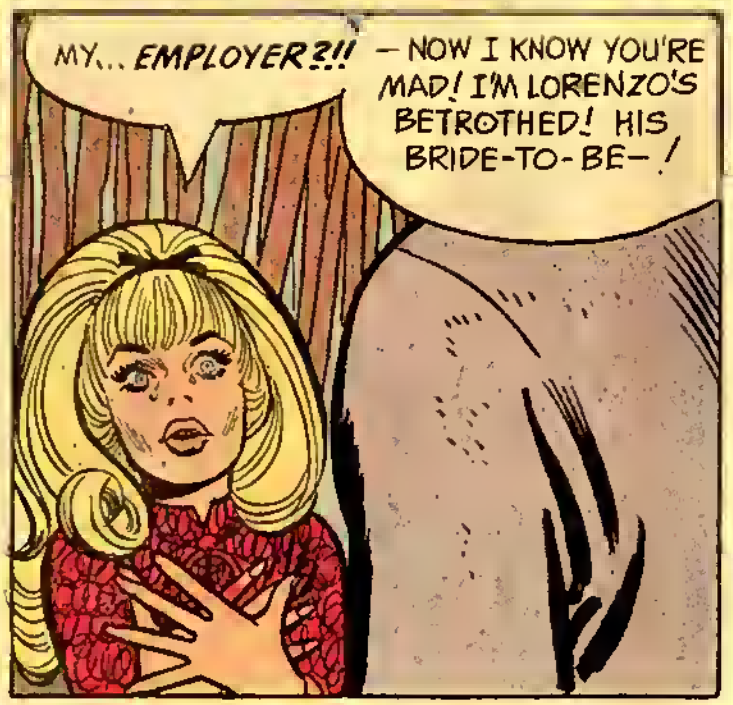
"MY POODGE WAS DEAD! SOMEONE OR SOME-THING HAD KILLED MY POODGE..."

"AS..AS.. A BIRD OF PREY MIGHT HAVE DONE, WHEN MAKING A KILL!!.. LIKE A FALCON!"

"I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I KNELT THERE IN MUTE SHOCK..."
YOU MUST LEAVE THIS ACCURSED ISLAND AT ONCE, SIGNORINA—

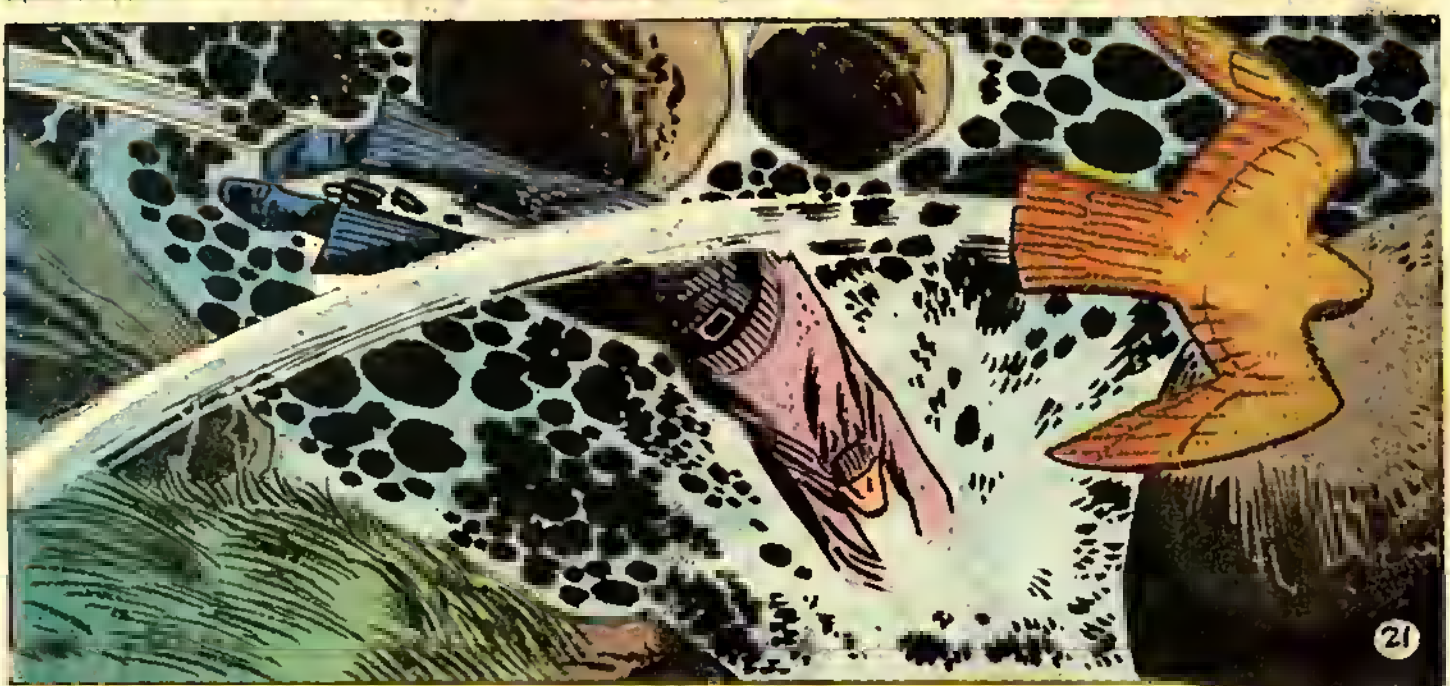
SIGNORINA! DO YOU NOT HEAR ME?
OOHH! OH, ROBERTO!
WHY ARE YOU HERE?
YOU MUST LEAVE HERE, NOW, BEFORE YOU ARE HURT, TOO—

BUT, THIS WAS JUST AN ACCIDENT! ARE YOU MAD, ROBERTO?
NOT I!— BUT PERHAPS HE IS! YOUR EMPLOYER, LORENZO!!


MY... EMPLOYER?!!
—NOW I KNOW YOU'RE MAD! I'M LORENZO'S BETROTHED! HIS BRIDE-TO-BE—!

YOU'RE NOT A...A "HIRED COMPANION" TO THE AILING CONTESSA?!?
NO! WHAT "IDLE GOSSIP" HAVE YOU BEEN LISTENING TO? I'VE ATTENDED LORENZO'S MOTHER, YES—! NOT FOR PAY—

—BUT BECAUSE I LOVE HIM! BUT WHY AM I TELLING YOU ALL THIS?— IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS—!!
SO THAT'S IT—!! WHAT A FOOL I'VE BEEN FOR WAITING SO LONG—!!



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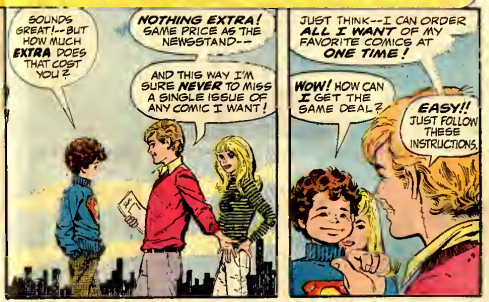

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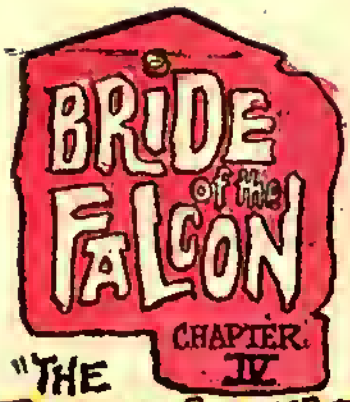
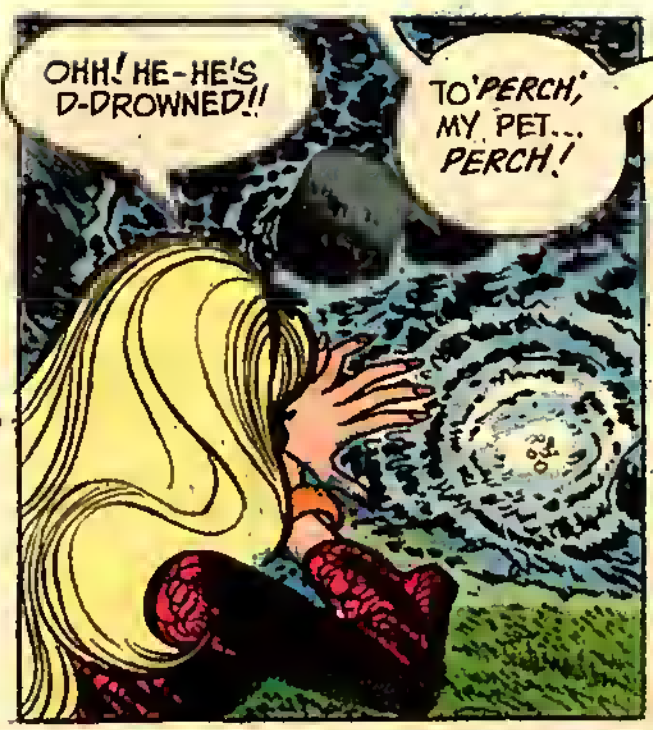
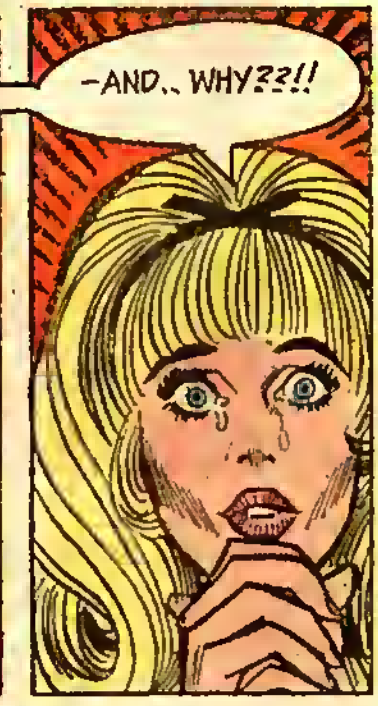


"THE FALCON KILLS"

"I WAS FROZEN TO THE SPOT... AS IF IN AN EVIL DREAM. IT COULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED...IT COULDN'T! AND YET IT HAD. IT WAS NO DREAM...





YOU'RE OVERWROUGHT, CARA MIA! WHAT HAPPENS ON MY ISLAND IS OF NO CONCERN TO THE POLICE! HOWEVER, HEREAFTER I WILL LEAVE THE BIRD IN MOTHER'S CUSTODY!

"LATER, IN THE CONTESSA'S ROOMS..."
MOTHER HAS ALWAYS FAVORED FALCONS, HAVEN'T YOU, MADRE MIA?

AND NOW, TO ARRANGE A PROPER BURIAL FOR YOUR PET—
IT'LL BE BETTER, I THINK..
.. IF YOU DON'T COME WITH ME, KATHY!

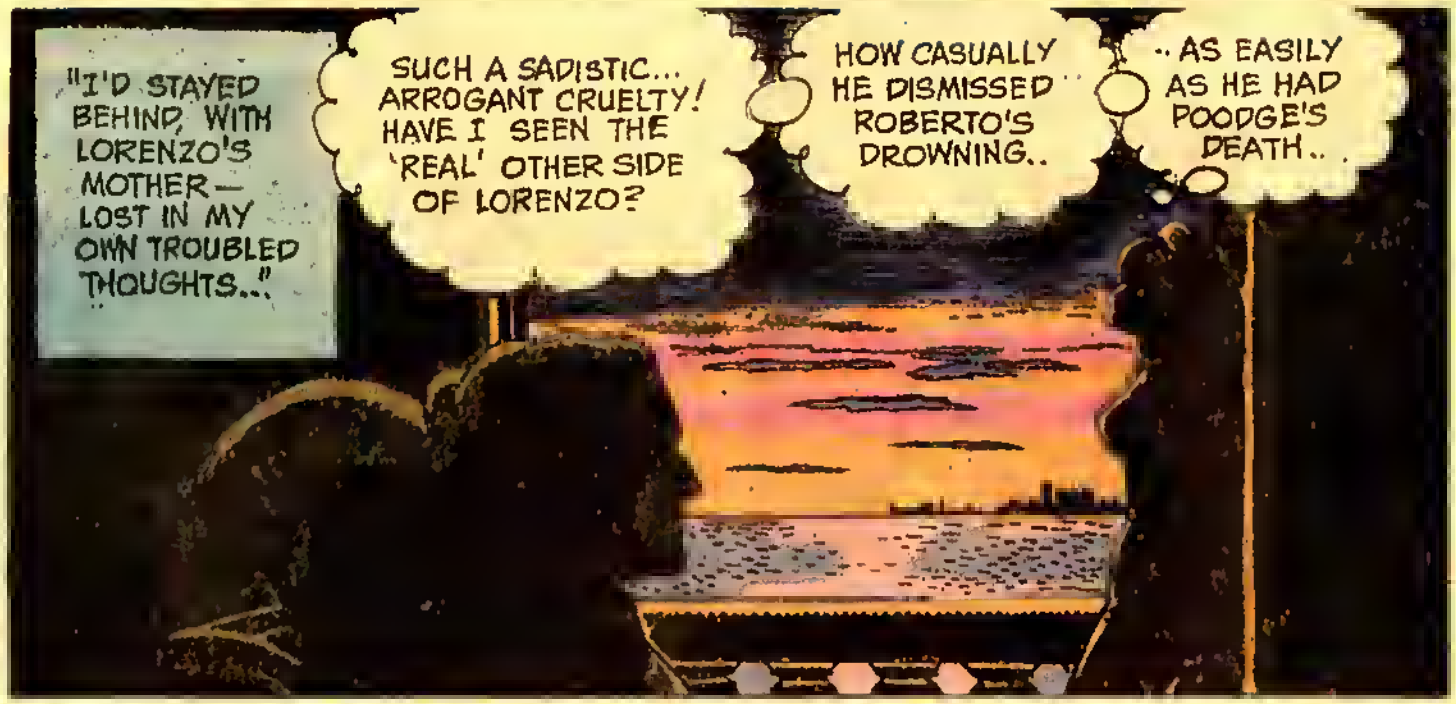
"I COULDN'T KNOW WHAT FOLLOWED, TILL LATER."
TH-THE DOG..IS..
GONE..!!??
BUT... HOW?!
..WHERE?!

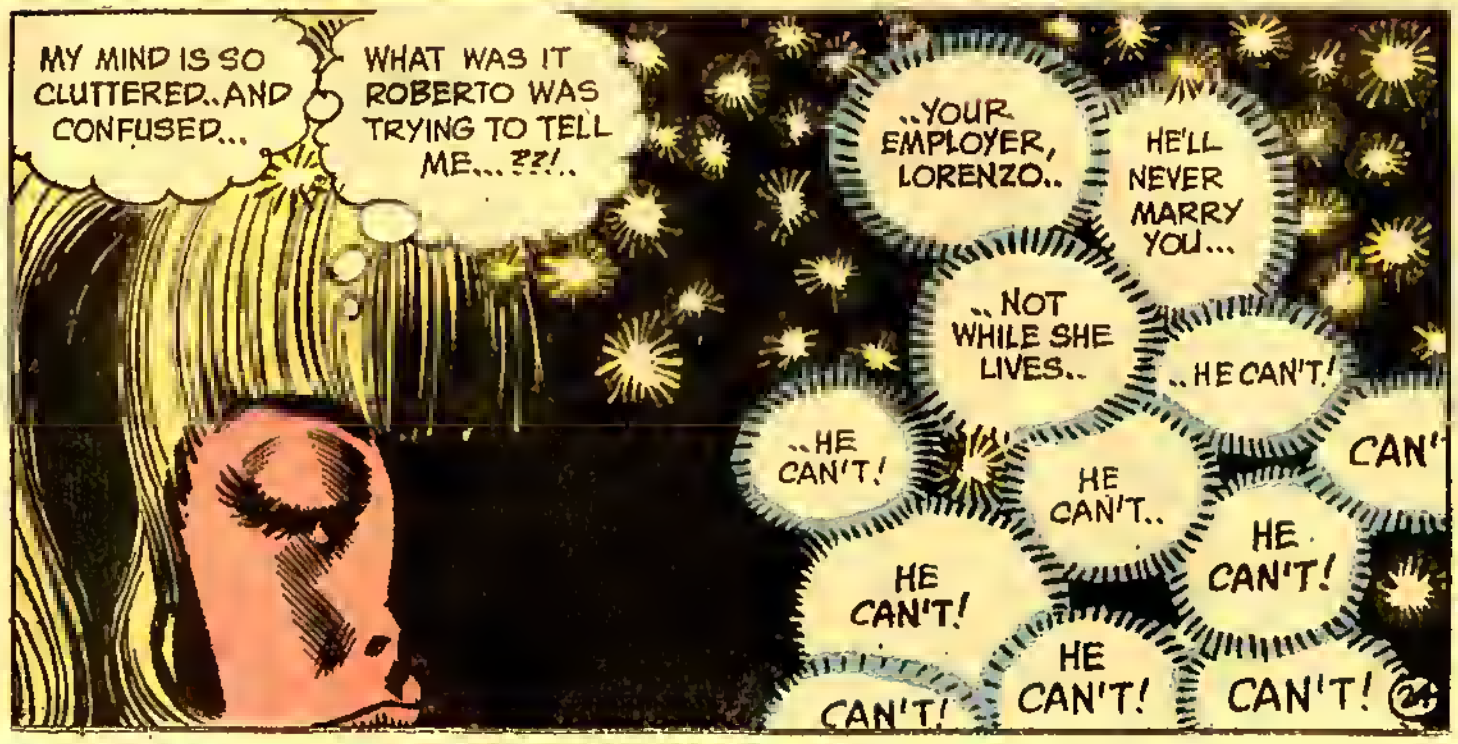
EXCUSÉ, SIGNORE... YOU SEARCH FOR THE SIGNORINA'S DEAD DOG?—

FORGIVE ME, BUT I'VE ALREADY BURIED IT..
TO SPARE HER FURTHER GRIEF!
WHAT...?!! YOU INSOLENT PEASANT...!!! SINCE WHEN DO YOU MAKE DECISIONS HERE?

ONLY I DO!!
WHERE IS IT-??
WHERE DID YOU BURY IT ??!!

..IN THE GARDEN..
...UNDER THE MINIATURE ROSES.. I TH-THINK!
I-I'M NOT.. SURE..
YOU STUPID CRETIN!
I'LL FIND IT MYSELF!


"I'D STAYED BEHIND, WITH LORENZO'S MOTHER— LOST IN MY OWN TROUBLED THOUGHTS..."
SUCH A SADISTIC... ARROGANT CRUELTY! HAVE I SEEN THE 'REAL' OTHER SIDE OF LORENZO?
HOW CASUALLY HE DISMISSED ROBERTO'S DROWNING..
..AS EASILY AS HE HAD POODGE'S DEATH..


MY MIND IS SO CLUTTERED..AND CONFUSED...
WHAT WAS IT ROBERTO WAS TRYING TO TELL ME...??!..
..YOUR EMPLOYER, LORENZO..
HE'LL NEVER MARRY YOU...
..NOT WHILE SHE LIVES..
..HE CAN'T!
..HE CAN'T!
HE CAN'T..
CAN'
HE CAN'T!
HE CAN'T!
HE CAN'T!
CAN'T!
CAN'T!

"AND THEN, SUDDENLY.. IT ALL BECAME TOO MUCH FOR ME! I BROKE DOWN.. LOST ALL RESTRAINT!.."

WHY?! WHY CAN'T LORENZO MARRY ME, OLD WOMAN?... YOU WON'T LET HIM, WILL YOU?!

WHY..?!? WHAT STRANGE HOLD DO YOU HAVE ON HIM?..WHY?!

"HOW COULD I EVER REACH THIS IMPENETRABLE WOMAN?"

CLICK CLICK CLICK CLICK

"BUT WHAT I SAW BELOW CALMED ME A BIT— HE WAS, AS HE PROMISED, PERSONALLY ATTENDING TO POODGE'S BURIAL!"

"MY CALM ALLOWED ME TO REALIZE A WAY TO COMMUNICATE WITH LORENZO'S MOTHER."

HER EYES!!! SHE CAN BLINK HER EYELIDS! THEY'RE NOT PARALYZED!

LISTEN! LISTEN TO ME... CLOSELY..

I WILL ASK YOU QUESTIONS, HEAR?

YOU WILL ANSWER THEM— YES!

ANSWER! BY BLINKING ONCE, FOR 'YES'... TWICE, FOR 'NO'!

UNDERSTAND?

CLICK CLICK CLICK CLICK

"I WORKED PATIENTLY... INTENSELY.. WITH HER TO GET A RESPONSE.. BUT.. NOTHING!!!

YOU MUST HAVE SOME CONTROL..

..ENOUGH TO BLINK AT WILL..

OR ARE YOU DELIBERATELY REFUSING ME, IN FEAR OF REVEALING SOME DREAD SECRET?

CLICK CLICK CLICK

"THEN, THE TRUTH OF IT SUDDENLY STRUCK ME"...

IT'S NOT THAT SHE WON'T ANSWER ME... SHE CAN'T!!

SHE, UNDOUBTEDLY, DOESN'T UNDERSTAND ENGLISH..!!!

CLICK CLICK CLICK

WE-WE'RE CUT OFF FROM EACH OTHER BY A.. A..

..A LANGUAGE BARRIER!!!

NO WAY... NO WAY!

'NO WAY' TO WHAT.. BELLEZZA MIA?

WH-? LORENZO?!

I--I HEARD HIM...!

I HEARD LORENZO'S VOICE!!!

I CAN HEAR AGAIN!

I CAN HEAR!!

"BRIDE OF THE FALCON" CONTINUES ON THE SECOND PAGE FOLLOWING

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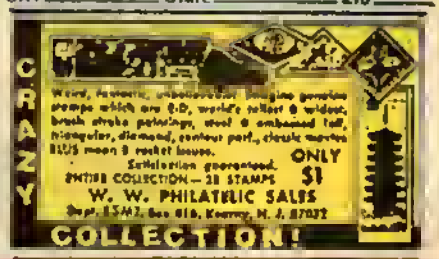

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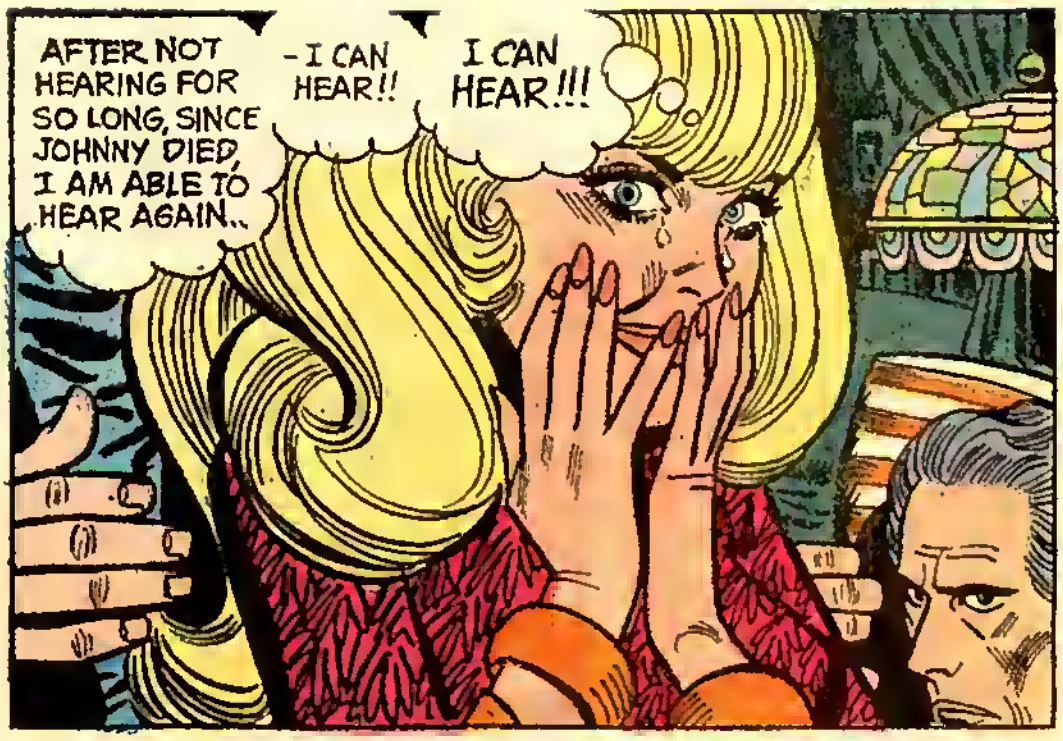
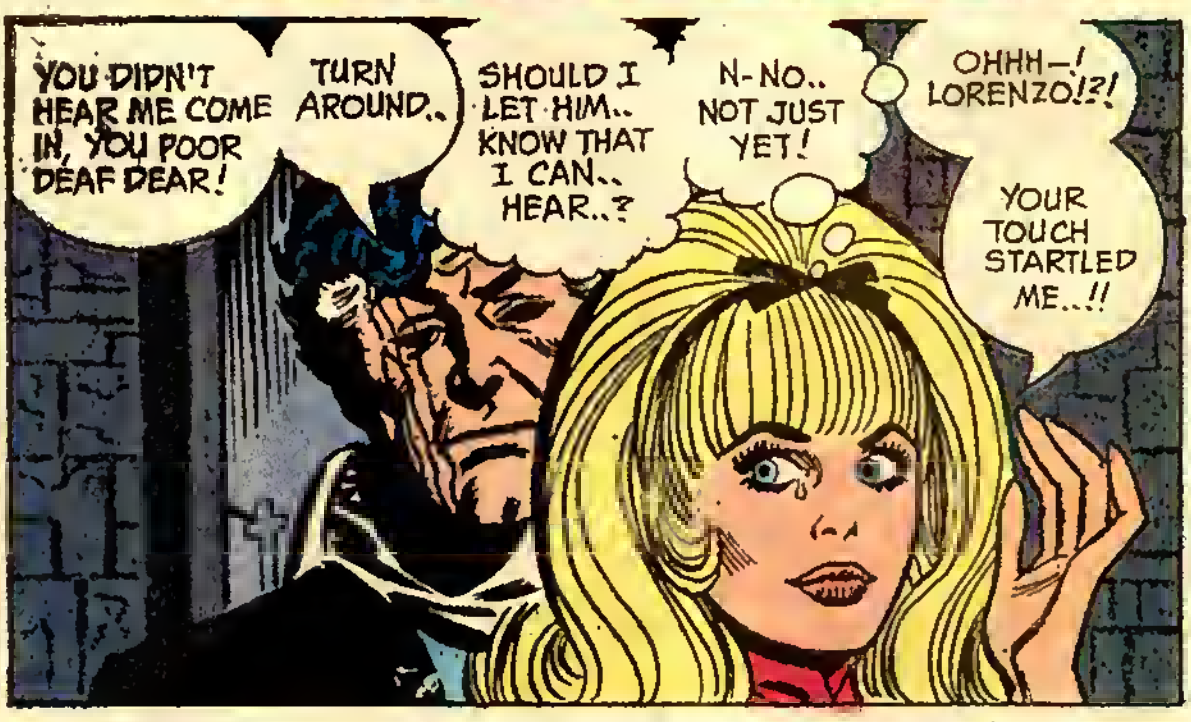
"RING OF JUDGMENT"

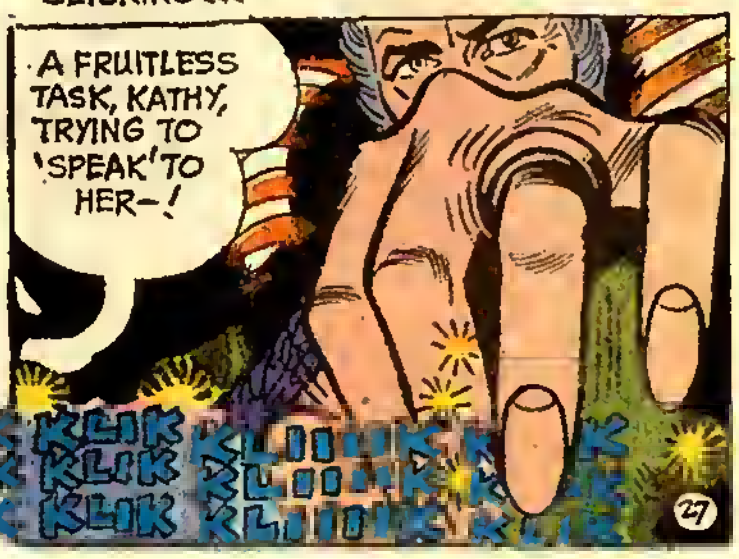
"I COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO TURN... YET! EVEN THOUGH I HEARD LORENZO'S FOOTSTEPS COMING UP BEHIND ME."



"I WAS NO LONGER A MISFIT-! CONFLICTING EMOTIONS SWEPT OVER ME ABOUT LORENZO.. AND MY TRUE FEELINGS TOWARD HIM-"



"MY RESTORED HEARING SEEMED TO BE VERY KEEN NOW— PICKING UP EVERY TINY SOUND... THEN, I HEARD IT! FOR THE FIRST TIME!... A FAINT PERSISTENT CLICKING!..."



"I WAS NO LONGER LISTENING TO LORENZO—RATHER.. I FOCUSED ON THAT RHYTHMIC CLICKING SOUND!"

MOTHER'S WEAKENING, IT SEEMS!

AND HER NERVOUS 'TIC' GETS WORSE, EVERY DAY...!

HER RING! IT'S HER WEDDING RING THAT SHE'S CLICKING...!

KLIKKLIKKLIK

"THE MORE I CONCENTRATED ON THAT RING'S PERSISTENT CLICKING, THE MORE I REALIZED.."

THAT'S NOT AN UNCONTROLLABLE TREMOR, OR 'TIC'! THERE'S A DEFINITE PATTERN... A RHYTHM.. TO IT—!

THREE SHORT CLICKS... PAUSE.. THEN THREE LONG CLICKS... THREE SHORT..

KLLIIIIK KLLIIIIK KLLIIIIK

KLIK KLIK KLIK

"AND SUDDENLY.. I KNEW..."

IT'S CODE..

SHE'S... TALKING TO ME!

KLIK KLIK KLIK KLLIIIIK KLLIIIIK KLLIIIIK KLIK KLIK KLIK

MORSE CODE!

THE 'S.O.S' DISTRESS SIGNAL!

HER EYES.. LOOKING AT HER RING!

THAT'S IT! HER RING! SHE WANTS ME TO 'SEE' HER RING!!

KLIK KLIK KLIK

KLLIIIIK KLLIIIIK KLLIIIIK

KLIK KLIK KLIK

BELLEZZA, WHY ARE YOU TREMBLING?

W-WHAT?

OH, I-I OH, YES...!

IT'S LATE.. AND I FORGOT TO GIVE YOUR MOTHER HER MEDICINE!

"I USED THE FIRST EXCUSE THAT CAME TO MIND—BUT IT WOULD SERVE ME WELL..."

OH? THAT WE MUSTN'T FORGET! I'LL GET IT FOR YOU, KATHY!

YES, PLEASE... THANK YOU!

"NOW HAVING THE ADVANTAGE OF HEARING HIS RETREATING FOOTSTEPS, I MOVED FAST!"

FORGIVE ME, SIGNORA.. BUT I MUST KNOW THE TRUTH..

..IF I UNDERSTOOD YOU CORRECTLY..

"MY LIMITED KNOWLEDGE OF ITALIAN SERVED ME.."

"TO MY BELOVED WIFE, VIOLETTA.. FINALMENTE.. LORENZO..!!

Finalmente Lorenzo

SHE'S HIS **WIFE!** NOT HIS MOTHER!

THAT'S WHAT ROBERTO TRIED TO TELL ME.. WHEN HE SAID LORENZO 'COULDN'T' MARRY ME..

KRRASHH! "A SUDDEN CRASH BEHIND ME BROUGHT ME AROUND BEFORE I COULD THINK—TOO LATE, I SAW.. LORENZO!!

SO?! YOU'RE 'DEAF' ARE YOU?!

YOU LITTLE FAKE, YOU CAN HEAR!!!

WHAT WERE YOU DOING WITH MY MOTHER'S RING?!!

AHAHH! SO YOU KNOW, THEN?!

THAT SHE'S NOT YOUR MOTHER? YES!

GOOD! THE 'COMEDY' IS OVER! SHE IS MY WIFE..

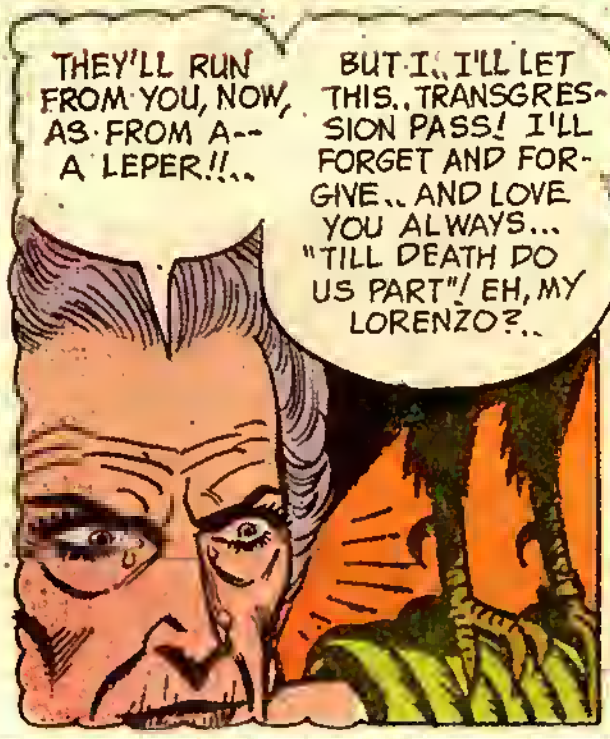
..SI, MY BELOVED, FAITHFUL WIFE.."TILL DEATH DO US PART".. EH, VIOLETTA?

BUT THERE WAS A TIME, KATHY.. WHEN MY KISSES FOR MY WIFE, VIOLETTA, WERE NOT SO COOL.. SO FORMAL..!
"AHH..SI... DESPITE THE DIFFERENCE IN OUR AGES, WE WERE AS YOUNG LOVERS, THEN... LOVING, WITH THE YOUTH SHE BOUGHT FROM ME, IN MARRIAGE! I WAS YET TO SUFFER MY SCARS, INSIDE OR OUT!"
"A WOMAN HER AGE DOES NOT OFTEN FIND HANDSOME, BUT POOR, NOBLEMEN ..FOR SALE! BUT I COULD BE GENEROUS, TOO, IN MY FASHION.."
FOR YOU, VIOLETTA.. MY MOST CHERISHED POSSESSION AS YOUR WEDDING PRESENT!
I'LL TEACH YOU HOW TO HANDLE IT SAFELY...
OH, LORENZO.. MY OWN SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH! I'M TOUCHED..!
"IT DIDN'T TAKE MUCH TO SATISFY HER... BUT I REMAINED UNSATISFIED! MY LIFE WAS STILL AHEAD OF ME.. I BURNED WITH PASSIONS I SOUGHT TO QUENCH..."
OHHH! SIGNORE, WHAT OF YOUR WIFE? DON'T YOU LOVE HER?
IS AN OLD BIRD AS TASTY AS YOU, MY PIGEON?..
"SUDDENLY..."
LORENZO!!?!!
SO!?
YOU LEAVE ME TO ATTEND A FALCON, WHILE YOU... YOU..!!
20

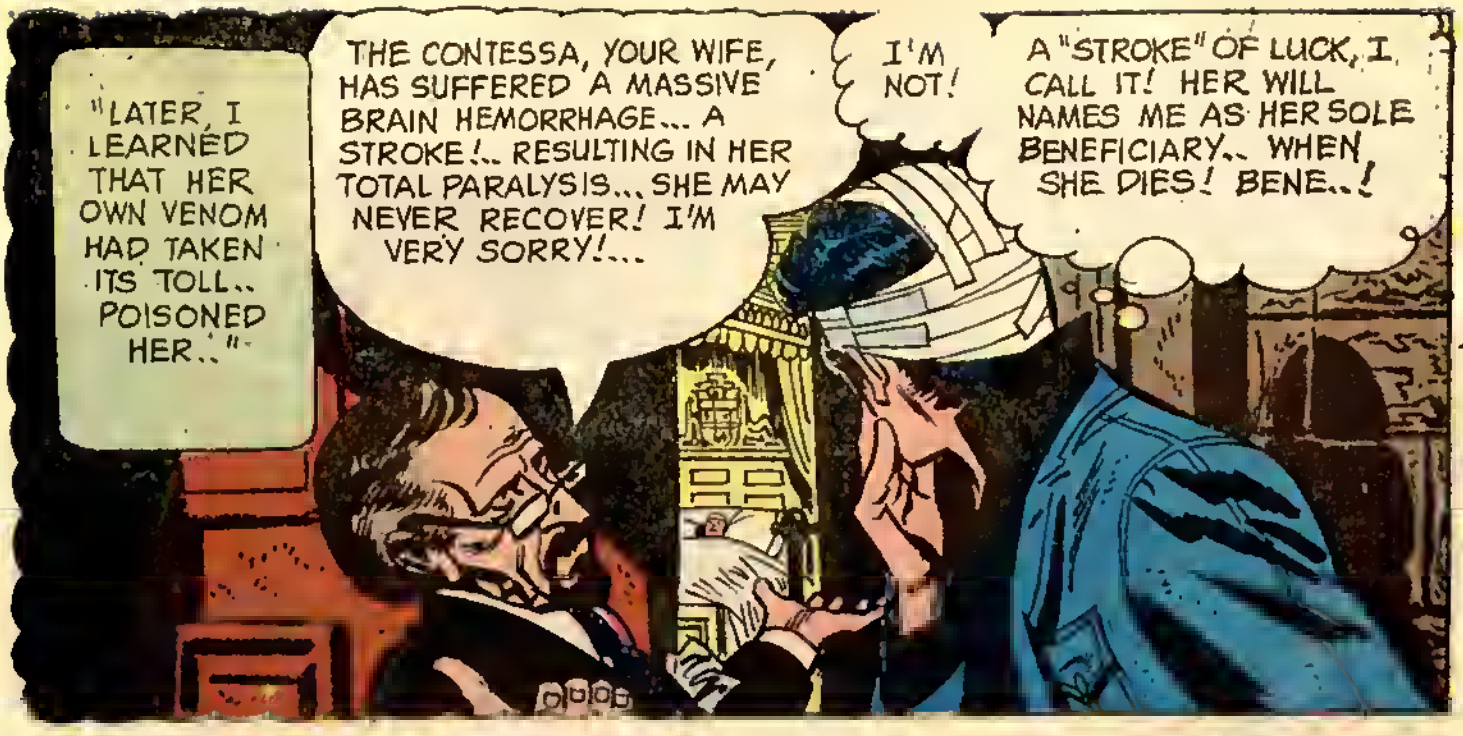
YOU FILTHY.. UNFAITHFUL.. ARROGANT YOUNG RAKE..!!! ...THIS...THIS IS HOW YOU REPAY ME FOR MY LOVE.. MY TRUST.. FOR ALL I'VE GIVEN YOU?!! ... HERE!.. TAKE BACK YOUR "WEDDING PRESENT"!!!
STRIKE, MY PET!!!
STRIKE!!!

SKREEEEEEEE
NO! NO! NOOOOO! ARRRGHH!

OHHMM-- MY FACE!
YES, YOUR 'HANDSOME' FACE.. NEVER AGAIN WILL IT ATTRACT PLUMP YOUNG BEAUTIES!

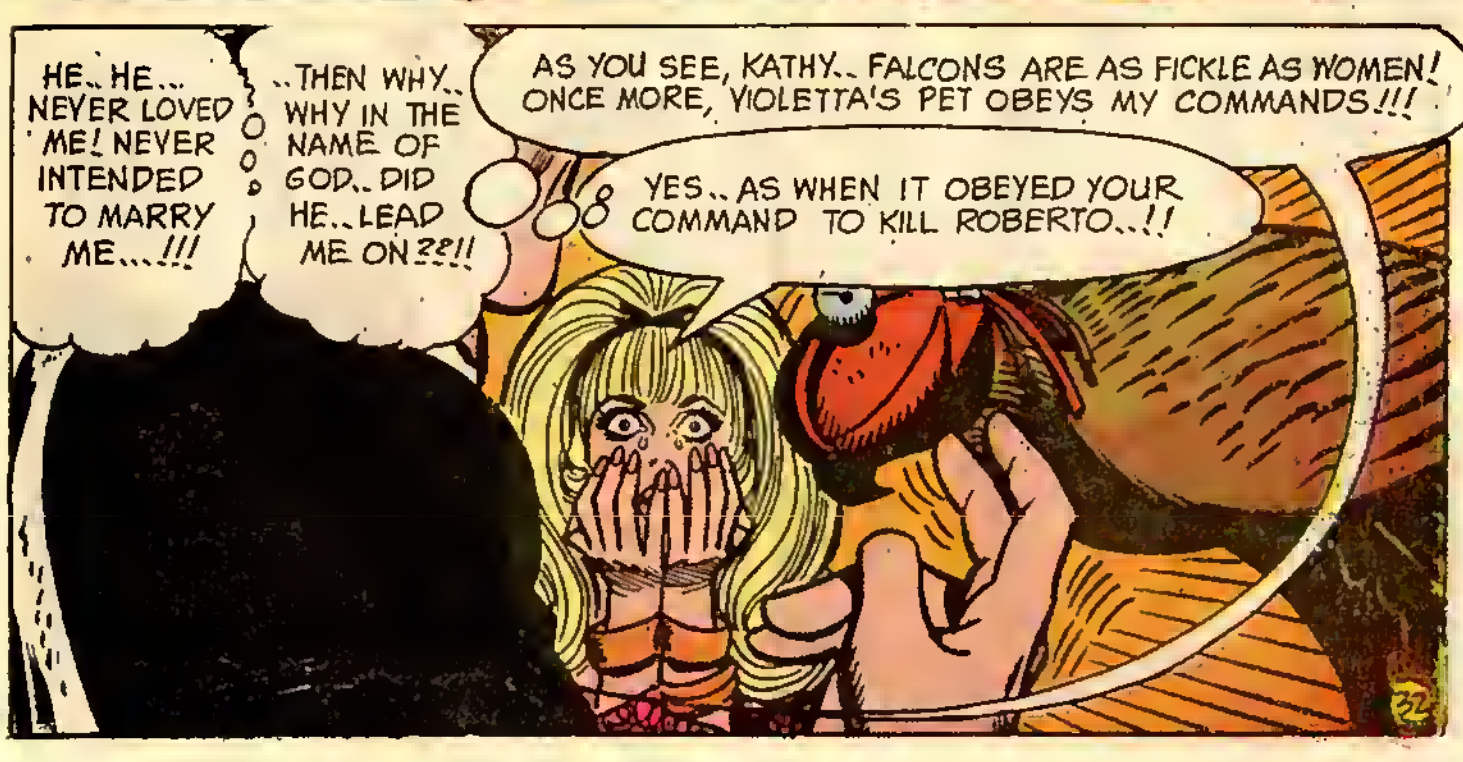

THEY'LL RUN FROM YOU, NOW, AS FROM A-- A LEPER!!..
BUT I.. I'LL LET THIS.. TRANSGRESSION PASS! I'LL FORGET AND FORGIVE.. AND LOVE YOU ALWAYS... "TILL DEATH DO US PART"! EH, MY LORENZO?..

OHH..AHHH! MY-MY HEAD!!


"LATER, I LEARNED THAT HER OWN VENOM HAD TAKEN ITS TOLL.. POISONED HER.."
THE CONTESSA, YOUR WIFE, HAS SUFFERED A MASSIVE BRAIN HEMORRHAGE... A STROKE!.. RESULTING IN HER TOTAL PARALYSIS... SHE MAY NEVER RECOVER! I'M VERY SORRY!...
I'M NOT!
A "STROKE" OF LUCK, I CALL IT! HER WILL NAMES ME AS HER SOLE BENEFICIARY.. WHEN SHE DIES! BENE..!

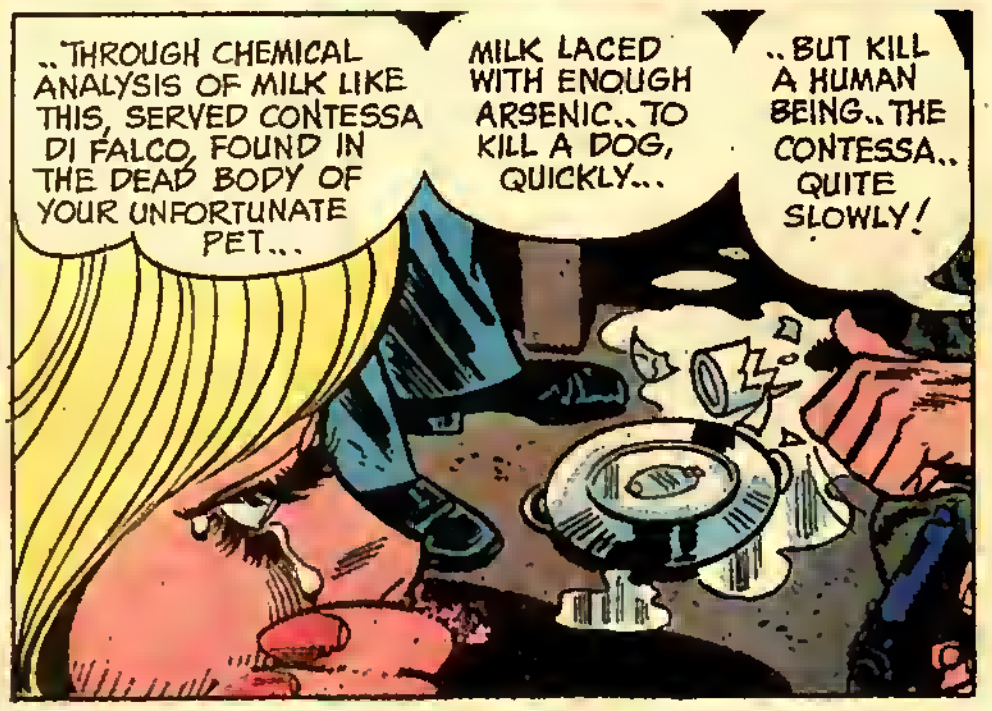
"MY DISFIGUREMENT MADE ME SEEK MY REVENGE.. I TAUNTED HER.. TELLING HER PRECISELY HOW NORMAL HER IMMINENT DEATH WOULD APPEAR"...!

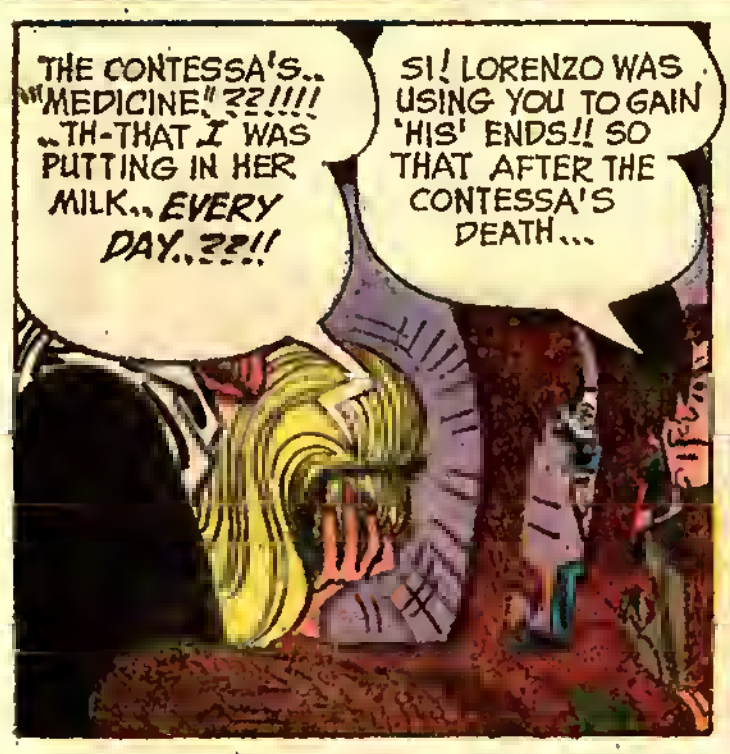
AND SO IT SHALL! THEN.. WITH YOUR WILLED ESTATE, VIOLETTA.. I'LL BUY BACK THE FACE I LOST...
..AND ALL THE ROMANCE AS YET NOT MINE..
..THROUGH THE BEST PLASTIC SURGERY YOUR MONEY CAN BUY! HAHAHA!


HE.. HE... NEVER LOVED ME! NEVER INTENDED TO MARRY ME...!!!
..THEN WHY.. WHY IN THE NAME OF GOD.. DID HE.. LEAD ME ON??!!
AS YOU SEE, KATHY.. FALCONS ARE AS FICKLE AS WOMEN! ONCE MORE, VIOLETTA'S PET OBEYS MY COMMANDS!!!
YES.. AS WHEN IT OBEYED YOUR COMMAND TO KILL ROBERTO..!!

NOT ONLY ROBERTO.. BUT 'POODGE', TOO! WHY'D YOU HAVE HIM KILLED, YOU--?!!!!
EXCUSE, SIGNORINA.. HE USED THE FALCON'S ATTACK TO COVER UP NOT ONLY THAT YOUR DOG WAS ALREADY DEAD, BUT... ..WHY!!

ALREADY DEAD..?!! WHA— ROBERTO ..YOU!?!
YOU'RE ALIVE!!!
OH, THANK HEAVEN!!!
THANK 'YOU', SIGNORINA KATHY.. FOR MAKING POSSIBLE THE UNMASKING OF THIS TWO-FACED MURDERER..

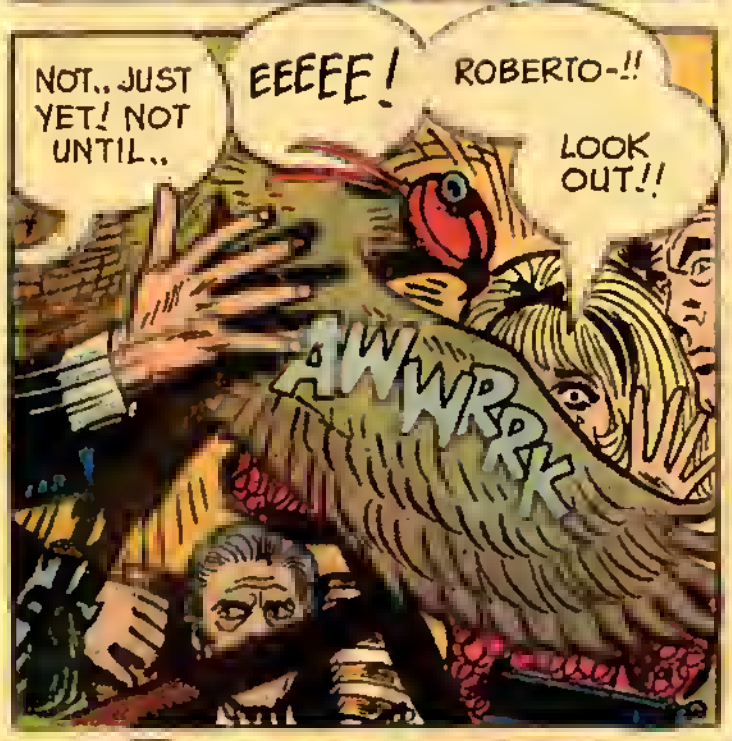

..THROUGH CHEMICAL ANALYSIS OF MILK LIKE THIS, SERVED CONTESSA DI FALCO, FOUND IN THE DEAD BODY OF YOUR UNFORTUNATE PET...
MILK LACED WITH ENOUGH ARSENIC.. TO KILL A DOG, QUICKLY...
..BUT KILL A HUMAN BEING.. THE CONTESSA.. QUITE SLOWLY!


THE CONTESSA'S.. "MEDICINE"??!!!! ..TH-THAT I WAS PUTTING IN HER MILK.. EVERY DAY..??!!
SI! LORENZO WAS USING YOU TO GAIN 'HIS' ENDS!! SO THAT AFTER THE CONTESSA'S DEATH...

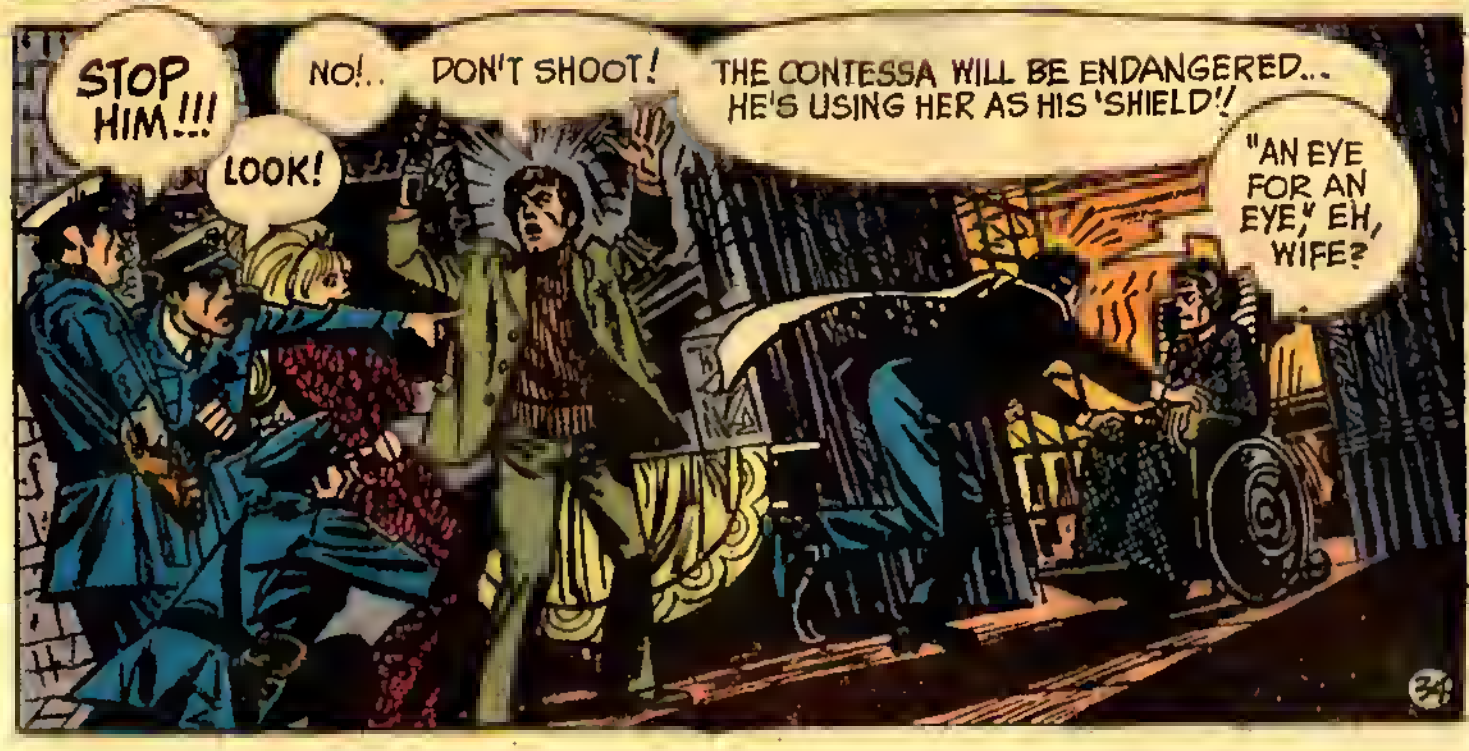
..IF THERE WERE ANY SUSPICION OF 'FOUL PLAY'.. HE COULD THEN ACCUSE YOU OF BEING AN AMERICAN FORTUNE-HUNTER, WHO'D KILLED HIS WIFE IN ORDER TO TAKE HER PLACE, AS THE NEW CONTESSA DI FALCO..!!!
HOW CAN YOU PROVE THAT IT IS NOT TRUE, EVEN NOW...EVEN THOUGH SHE'S NOT SUCCEEDED??!!

YOUR OWN SLY WORDS BETRAY YOU, DI FALCO! YOU USED WORDS WELL, IN ORDER TO LURE HER OVER HERE..
..THROUGH YOUR "PERSONAL AD" WHICH MADE US SUSPECT YOU!
WHO.. WHO ARE YOU??!!

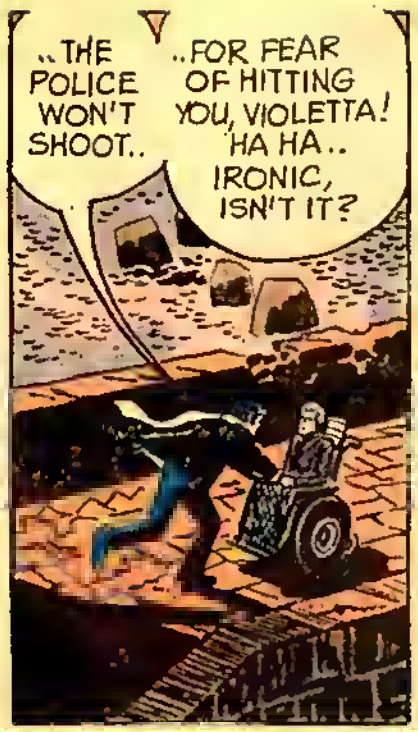
I, SIGNORÉ..? CAPITANO ROBERTO STROZZI, OF INTERPOL... YOUR 'AGED SERVANT'.. IS MY AIDE!
NOW.. IF YOU'LL COME QUIETLY..


NOT.. JUST YET! NOT UNTIL..
EEEEE!
ROBERTO-!!
LOOK OUT!!
AWWRRK

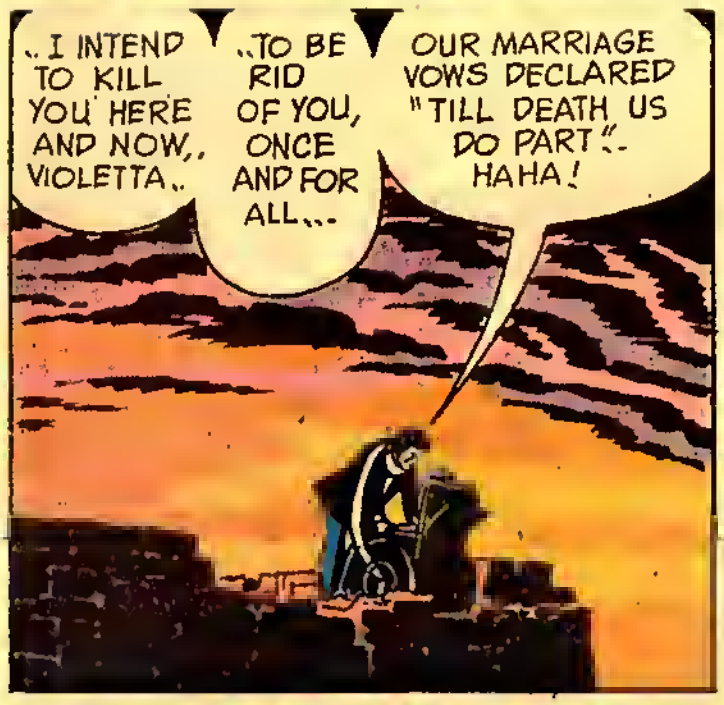
KRAK


STOP HIM!!!
NO!..
DON'T SHOOT!
THE CONTESSA WILL BE ENDANGERED... HE'S USING HER AS HIS 'SHIELD'!
LOOK!
"AN EYE FOR AN EYE," EH, WIFE?

-AND "A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH"!
LORENZO! STOP! LET THE CONTESSA GO! STOP!!


..THE POLICE WON'T SHOOT..
..FOR FEAR OF HITTING YOU, VIOLETTA! HA HA.. IRONIC, ISN'T IT?

THEY'RE AFRAID THEY MAY WOUND, OR KILL YOU ACCIDENTALLY!
..THAT I'M USING YOU ONLY AS A 'SHIELD'.. HA! NOT SO, MY SILENT BRIDE! SO, ENJOY THIS FAST-PACED "SUNSET-STROLL" .. IT WILL BE YOUR LAST!..

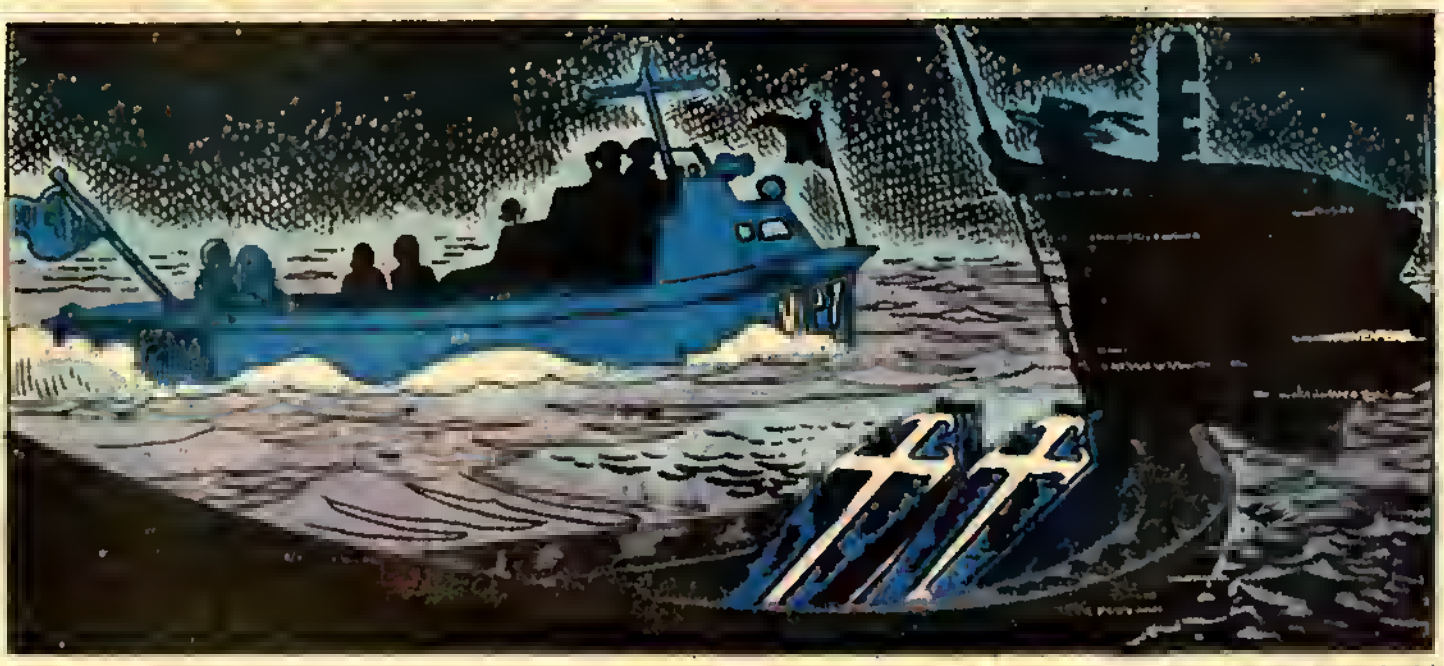

..I INTEND TO KILL YOU HERE AND NOW,, VIOLETTA..
..TO BE RID OF YOU, ONCE AND FOR ALL...
OUR MARRIAGE VOWS DECLARED "TILL DEATH US DO PART".- HAHA!

LOOK AT ME, VIOLETTA! LOOK!! MY SCARRED FACE! MY HATE FOR YOU —

LOOK HARD! FOR I'M THE VERY LAST THING YOU'LL EVER SEE — IN LIFE!!

AS DEATH.. NOW.. "PARTS" US.. FOREV..?!
WHA?? AKKK!!

AAAAAAAAAAAAA



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D-12 PEACE

D-13 ANACONDA

D-14 NO-NO

D-15 SMILIN' "DEVIL"

D-18 BLACK MAGIC STAR

D-19 MOSLEM MOON

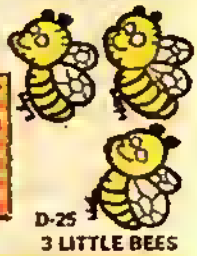
D-20 PEACE ON EARTH

D-21 RAINBOW FISH

D-22 LOVE

D-23 ECOLOGY

D-24 AMERICAN FLAG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WILL I EVER SEE YOU AGAIN

J-1292

It was late evening when the old-fashioned passenger train chugged wearily into the tiny Ayrshire station, pausing long enough only to take on water and discharge a young American passenger named Vanessa Lincoln before puffing away again into the night. Vanessa had never been to Scotland before, and her body pulsated with the combination of eagerness and uneasiness that afflicts every traveler in a foreign land. This land, however, was the ancestral home of Franklin Hawkes, and Vanessa's heart pounded when she realized that soon she would be seeing him again.

She did not actually know very much about him—he was a strong, quiet man who spoke only guardedly about himself and about his past—but she knew that there was something about him that made him different from every man she had ever met, and she knew that in the eight months they had been apart, she had been able to enjoy herself with no one else.

She had met Franklin Hawkes at Wellesford, a small but fashionable women's college nestled in the green hills of Chutney, Vermont. It was summertime—most of her friends had left the state on exotic foreign vacations—and to alleviate the boredom of a small-town summer she had registered in Franklin's summer seminar in Middle European culture. She had expected a tedious course, filled with names and dates and insignificant facts about half-forgotten places, but instead the informal course had centered around Middle European legends—around werewolves, and vampirism, and black magic. One day, while he delivered a lecture about werewolves, Franklin's eyes had begun to brighten, to flicker in an intense, almost passionate way, as if the subject held some hidden fascination for him that he could not possibly communicate to his students. The lecture, the way those eyes had flashed at her, had frightened Vanessa, but deep down she knew that it had excited her too.

One day, Vanessa had stayed after class to ask Franklin a question, and he had insisted that they go out for coffee together. They began to see more of each other, and before long she had fallen hopelessly in love with him. Then, however, fall came, and with it the end of the fascinating seminar. It was time for Franklin to return to his ancestral home in Ayrshire, Scotland. She had cried softly when he kissed her goodbye, because she had felt certain that she would never see him again.

"I don't know if I'll ever see you again, Vanessa," he had said softly. "But I want you to know that there are . . ."

"There are what?" Vanessa had demanded. "What are you trying to tell me?"

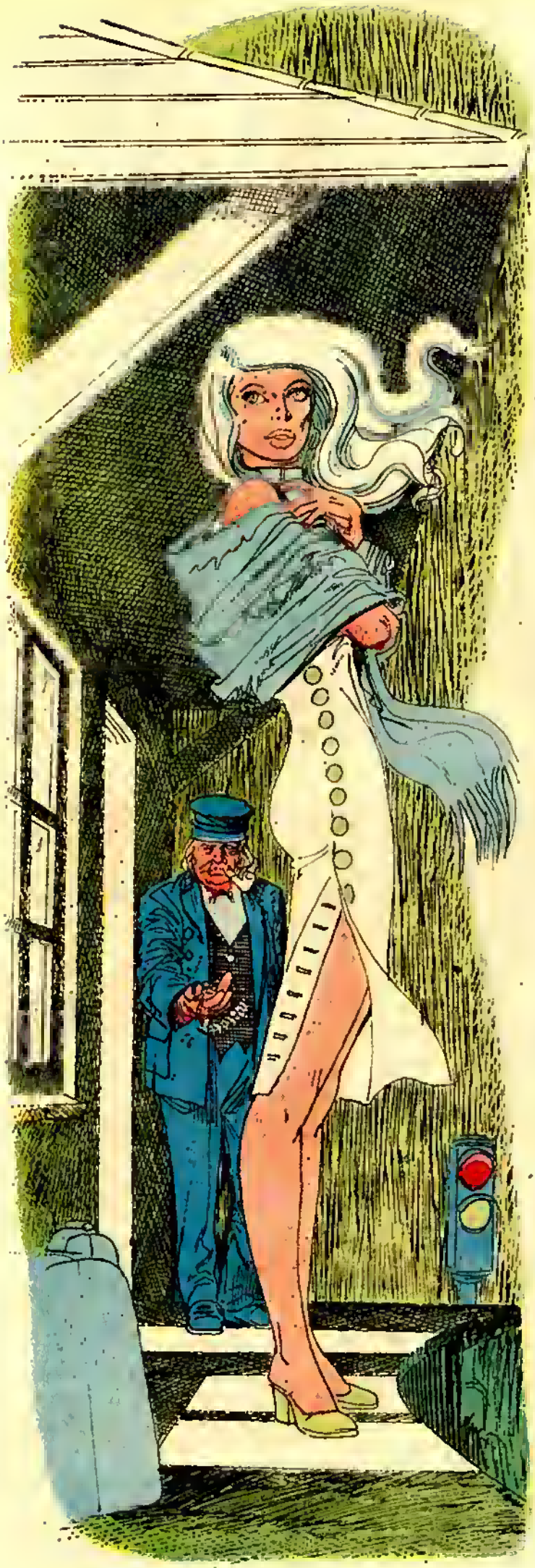
"Nothing!" Franklin had answered abruptly. "Just, promise that you will never forget me!"

"I promise," whispered Vanessa. "I prom . . ." And then she had fallen silent, her answer smothered in the warmth of Franklin's final, passionate goodbye.

That had been eight months ago. Oh, how her heart had leaped when she had seen the Ayrshire postmark and realized that the letter was from him! How she had torn at the envelope, eager to linger over every loving word, to savor the caress of each tender thought coming to her from so far away. . . .

But there had been no loving words inside the envelope—only a short, bizarre message: "Come to Ayrshire at once. Tell no one you are coming. Franklin."

Vanessa had read and re-read the letter a thousand times—in her room, on the way to the airport, on the plane, on the tiny train to Ayrshire. But the thousandth reading had been no more enlightening than the first, and with each new reading the letter had seemed more foreboding, more mysterious.



Now, as she stepped onto the platform at Ayrshire and the tiny coal-burning train coughed and sputtered and lurched its way out of the station and into the night, she reached in her purse for the letter, and she thought about Franklin—about his tall, dark frame, his powerful but tender hands, and his warm, knowing eyes, eyes that could speak silently of love, and yet cry out to you about some dark suffering that he could not share with anyone. She thought about that last warm kiss . . . and when the image of the kiss began to disappear from her mind's eye, she strained to reach out for it so that she might linger with it awhile longer. . . .

"Harrumph!" coughed the voice. "Harrumph!"

Vanessa snapped out of her reverie and whirled around. Standing beside her on the platform was a white-haired old man in the uniform of a Scottish station master. He smoked an old pipe, yellow from the many pounds of tobacco it had digested, and his eyes twinkled when he talked, like the eyes of St. Nicholas in some happy Yuletide cartoon.

St. Nicholas or not, Vanessa did not like him. There was something unreal, something frightening about this jolly station master, and something malevolent about the twinkle in his eye. It was as if he were looking through her, as if . . .

"You are Miss Vanessa, are ye not?" he asked in a kindly voice.

"Yes, I am," she replied. "But how did . . . ?"

"And you're going to the Hawkes castle," he added knowingly, tamping his pipe but not bothering to answer her question.

"Why, yes," replied Vanessa, bewildered, "but how . . . ?"

"Word travels quickly in Ayrshire," he answered brightly, with a nod of his head and a puff of his pipe. "But I wouldn't go there if I were you."

"Why not?" asked Vanessa, a little irritated with the old station master, but eager to hear his story nevertheless.

"Do ye believe in the occult, Miss Vanessa?" asked the station master slyly.

"Why, I don't know!" cried Vanessa, a bit taken aback. "I . . ."

"And do ye believe in werewolves?" asked the station master, his eyes twinkling ever more brightly with each new question.

"Werewolves!" exclaimed Vanessa, now a bit out of breath.

"Ye would not be the first young lady what's gone to visit Franklin Hawkes at his castle, and never returned to tell the tale!" warned the station master, obviously enjoying Vanessa's discomfort.

But by now Vanessa had recovered her composure, and she was beginning to get angry at this impertinent little man. "Are you saying that Franklin Hawkes is a werewolf?" she demanded. "And that he invites young girls to his castle to . . . to . . ."

"That I am, m'am," replied the station master with a smile, and with that he turned on his heel and strode away down the platform.

At the castle, Vanessa tried to conceal the gnawing anxiety, the horrible sense of foreboding that the station master had made her feel, when Franklin took her in his arms and kissed her lovingly, hungrily, for the first time in eight long months. He did not mention the letter, or why he had sent for her. He seemed overjoyed, but he also seemed a bit surprised, as if he had not really expected to see her. He insisted that she go to bed at once, to get a good night's rest after her tiring journey from America.

CONTINUED ON 2nd PAGE FOLLOWING.

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Soon afterward, as Vanessa lay in her bed, bathed in the wan light of a full moon pouring through the open window, she became aware of a shadowy figure creeping stealthily through the doorway and into her room. Seconds later, it was standing over her, like a jungle beast waiting for its prey to awaken, so as to be able to revel in its terror before leaping at its jugular.

Vanessa was wide awake now, her breath coming in short gasps, a bone-chilling scream frozen solid in her throat. The image of the station master flashed before her, telling her about the werewolves and about the other young girls who had visited Franklin in this castle.

As the beast stepped out of the shadow, Vanessa could see its face clearly for the first time. It was a human face, but a human face that had somehow become horribly transformed into the hairy muzzle of a snarling beast. Moonlight glistened off of his bared teeth, and it snarled somewhere deep in its throat, like a starving wolf tensing for a savage attack.

Then Vanessa screamed one of those last terrible screams that come only to victims for whom there is no hope left at all.

Then, suddenly, there was someone else in the room—a man, carrying a pistol. The beast uttered a ghastly shriek as the man fired one shot, then another, and then another. Slowly, painfully, the beast slumped lifeless to the floor, then vanished into dust before Vanessa's eyes as if a thousand eternities had come and gone in a single instant.

With quick strides, the man with the pistol walked to Vanessa's night-stand and lit a candle. Now, as the flame flickered and light flooded the room, Vanessa could see that her savior was . . . Franklin Hawkes!

Vanessa began to sob, "Who . . . what . . . was that . . . creature?" she asked.

"The creature," answered Franklin softly, "was a werewolf. Centuries ago, my ancestor killed a werewolf in this very room, with silver bullets from this very gun, just as the beast was about to murder his wife. Since then, the descendants of that werewolf have wreaked their vengeance here, by enticing women to this castle and destroying them as they sleep. This dead werewolf is the reason why I did not bring you with me from America . . . why I never sent for you . . . why . . ."

"But you did send for me," said Vanessa slowly. "The letter . . ."

"Letter?" asked Franklin, plainly bewildered. **I did not send any letter!** But what does it matter? The werewolf is dead, and now you must stay. There won't be another werewolf in the castle for another generation at least. We will be married tomorrow! This castle, once so dreary and lifeless, will become a happy, joyous place at last!"

Suddenly, on the floor where the corpse of the werewolf had fallen, Vanessa spied an old pipe, yellow from all the tobacco that had passed through it in its time. "That pipe!" cried Vanessa. "It belongs to the station master!"

"Station master?" asked Franklin. **"What station master?"**

"Why, the **old man** at the Ayrshire station!" replied Vanessa. "I met him this evening, when I got off the train!"

"It doesn't matter to me," said Franklin with an easy laugh and a lighthearted shrug of his shoulders. "But, Vanessa, Ayrshire is only a tiny village. We have **never** had a **station master** here."

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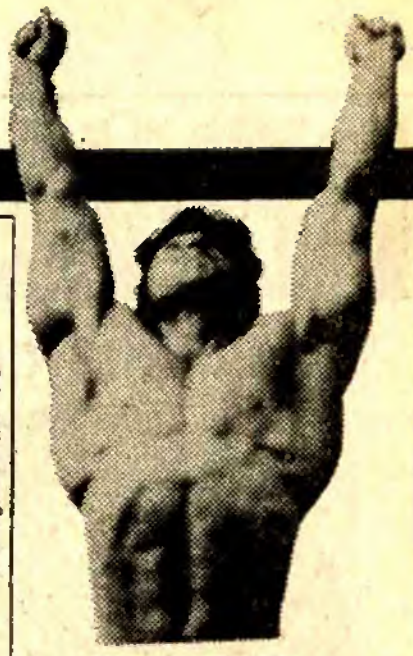

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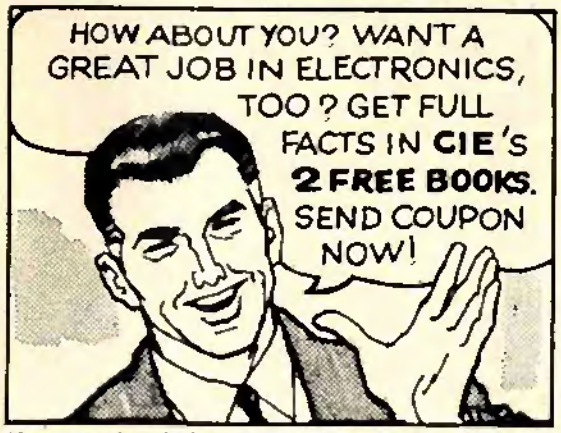

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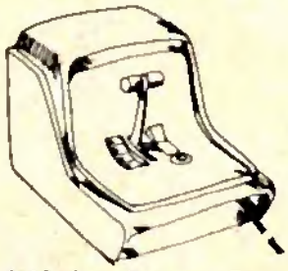

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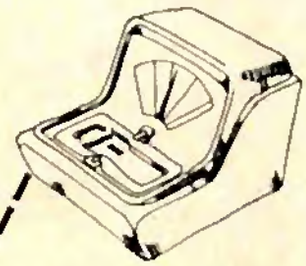

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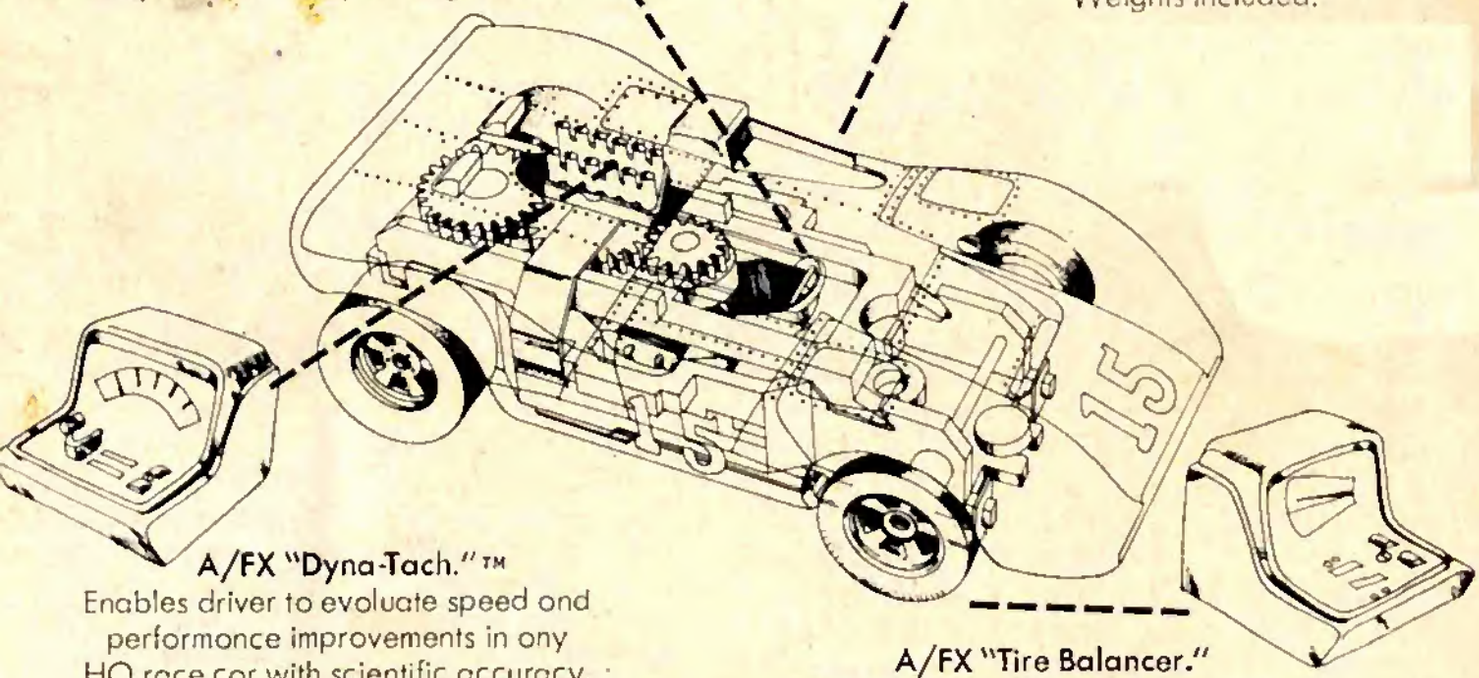

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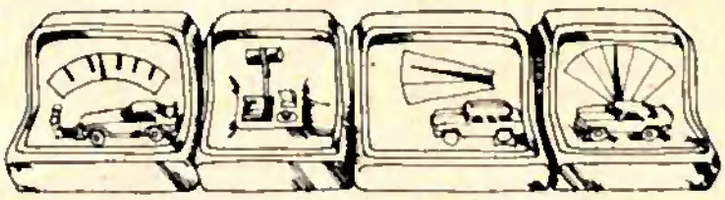

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